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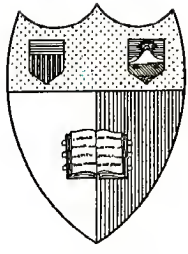

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MODERN ENGLAND

The England around us becomes our own England, an England whose chief forces are industry and science, the love of popular freedom and of law, an England which presses steadily forward to a larger social justice and equality, and which tends more and more to bring every custom and tradition, religious, intellectual, and political, to the test of pure reason.

—JOHN RICHARD GREEN.

MODERN ENGLAND

A RECORD OF OPINION AND ACTION FROM THE TIME OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION TO THE PRESENT DAY

BY

ALFRED WILLIAM BENN

AUTHOR OF "THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH RATIONALISM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY"

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

[ISSUED FOR THE RATIONALIST PRESS ASSOCIATION, LTD.]

LONDON :

WATTS & CO.,

17, JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET STREET, E.C.

1908

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TO

BERNHARD BERENSON

PREFACE

THE scope and limits of the present work are to some extent indicated by its second title. A record of opinion and action, as distinguished from a record of events, deals especially with those elements of history which are determined by mental causes, by human feelings, human reason, and human will, rather than by those unconscious agencies which the great historians of antiquity were wont to group together under the names of fortune or fate. In pursuance of this method I have omitted masses of detail which bulk very largely in the pages of most English Histories, such as the particulars of battles and sieges, incidents in the lives of great personages possessing merely biographical interest, Court pageants, and so forth. On the other hand, this economy of space has enabled me to include some intellectual events that other historians have altogether omitted, and to give a much greater relative prominence to those general tendencies by which social changes are ultimately determined. In particular, I have devoted special attention to that widespread disintegration of theological beliefs which Nietzsche has called the greatest event of modern history, bringing into view on the one side its antecedents in the philosophy, science, and scholarship of the age, and on the other side its reaction on literature and politics.

This task has involved the reproduction in a summary form of much that has already appeared in my *History of English Rationalism;* but a repeated survey of the field has enabled me to include a few details not mentioned in the larger work.

On matters not connected with the Rationalistic movement I have sometimes found myself obliged to go somewhat more into detail than the general scope of this History seemed to demand, because the ground was pre-occupied by views that in my opinion are either false or incomplete. For instance, the praise for efficiency so often bestowed on our old oligarchical government appears to me undeserved. The credit for philanthropic legislation so freely given by modern Tories to the Tory party at the expense of Whigs and Radicals is, so far as I can make out, totally unjustified. The services rendered to good government by the philosophic Radicals have been strangely overlooked, even by their special historians, M. Elie Halévy and the late Sir Leslie Stephen. I feel extreme diffidence in opposing, on his own ground, so high an authority as Professor Albert Dicey. But I cannot help thinking that in his important work on *Law and Opinion* he has enormously exaggerated the part given to individualism and *laissez-faire* in the philosophy of Bentham and his school. It seems to me that our modern socialistic legislation was in part anticipated by the old Utilitarians, in part has been directly developed out of their principles.

With regard to English foreign policy, I do not think George Canning has yet received anything like his due meed of recognition as a "hero of the nations." And

the same observation applies with even greater force to Canning's true successor, Palmerston. The serious errors that mark Palmerston's closing years have somewhat clouded his reputation. But they were errors inspired by the same noble love of justice and freedom which, together with a patriotism more antique than modern, was the moving principle of his whole political career. As a part of this policy he fought the Crimean War, which, if I am not mistaken, was no such ghastly blunder as is now commonly believed, but a necessary step in the deliverance of Europe from the old despotisms and its reconstitution on the lines of national independence. I hold that Kinglake, genuinely Liberal as in many ways he was, has obscured the true interpretation of the war waged by England and France against Russia by representing it in the light of a mere dynastic intrigue of Louis Napoleon's for obliterating the memory of the *Coup d'État*. My view is that France was drawn into the war by England, acting under Palmerston's guidance; but that England's motives were not self-interested, the object of her people being to avenge the wrongs of Hungary and to deliver Europe from the despotism that had been weighing on it for forty years. And the profound mistake of Disraeli, when he fancied himself the inheritor of Palmerston's policy, was not to see this—not to see that the English people are always on the side of freedom, and that freedom in 1876 was not represented by Turkey, but by Russia.

To all appearances, it has not been reserved for the twentieth century to discard the enthusiasms of its predecessor; and any English statesman who imagines

that the idea of freedom has been played out will sooner or later—and sooner rather than later—discover to his cost what potentialities of energy that idea still contains.

My best thanks are due to Mr. G. M. Trevelyan, who has kindly read through this work in MS., and suggested some important corrections; to my wife, who has given me invaluable assistance in revising the proof-sheets; and to the press-reader of Messrs. Watts and Co., whose criticisms have enabled me to rectify some inaccuracies of statement and style.

A. W. B.

January 19th, 1908.

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Chapter I.

ORGANISED ANARCHY

Forty years before the French Revolution began the greatest of French political philosophers, Montesquieu, declared that liberty was the organic principle of the English Constitution, the supreme end for whose attainment every part of its complicated mechanism had been devised. And there can be no doubt that, next to the republics of classical antiquity—if not, indeed, before them—England continued to be the ideal by which Montesquieu's saner countrymen were guided in their endeavour to substitute a more rational form of government for the decrepit despotism of their Bourbon kings.

This admiration, although excessive, rested on a solid basis of fact. At the opening of the revolutionary era England had for a century possessed far more political liberty than was enjoyed by any other great European State. Except among her own emancipated children, the newly-constituted United States of North America, no parallel to it could be found. It must not, of course, be forgotten that the term "political liberty" bears two independent senses. It stands for the absence of vexatious trammels on individual action. But it stands also for self-government, for the participation of the people in the passing and the administration of their laws, in the choice of their rulers, in shaping the

general policy of the State. Now, in both senses of the word England had much less liberty than she afterwards obtained; but the amount realised was still considerable. So far as the higher and middle classes were concerned, people could generally go about without let or hindrance, and, within the limits of mutual respect, could say or do what they liked; while the country was governed by public opinion to an extent elsewhere unknown. The voice of the educated classes and the wishes of the great interests—so far as they had become articulate—which divided English society among them found a tolerably efficacious expression in representative institutions which, however defective from a modern point of view, were not ill adapted to the wants of the time, in trial by jury, in public meetings, in pamphlet literature, and in the newspaper Press.

Political observers thought it much to preserve without extending what, in their opinion, had been so completely won. The spirit of English liberty during the latter part of the eighteenth century took the form of jealous opposition to all encroachments, real or supposed, on the part of what was called the power of the Crown. The tyranny of the Stuarts and, it must be added, of Cromwell had left bitter memories behind, not always manifested in the most reasonable ways.

Under the first two Georges there could be little to fear from the personal ambition of the king. Those sovereigns were entirely in the hands of the great Whig families to whom they owed their throne, and who could alone maintain them on it against the steady hostility of the country gentlemen

and the occasional ill-will of the masses, always ready to resent the intrusion of a foreigner.

Still the royal authority, though not directly in evidence, continued to exist, and made itself felt in more than one way. It was responsible, largely through the silent influence of Queen Caroline, for Sir Robert Walpole's long tenure of office, and, so far, must be reckoned as a mainly beneficent force. On the other hand, royalty has to be debited with abuses recalling the bad days of the Stuarts. The Court still set an example of profligacy and extravagance. The national wealth was squandered on unworthy favourites. The country was entangled in foreign wars with which it had no concern, through the dynastic interests of the reigning family; and incompetent princes received high military commands, with disastrous results to our arms.

With the accession of George III. the king's personal power both in principle and practice returned to vigorous life. Various causes simultaneously worked to the same effect. Bolingbroke, the ablest and most brilliant political writer of his age, had for many years been preaching the gospel of the Patriot King, of a ruler who, raised by his position above the strife of factions, should devote himself entirely to the good of the country; he had won over the intellect of England to this new form of Toryism; and his principles, so far as they made for absolutism, were highly acceptable to the circle in which the heir to the throne had been brought up. George III.'s mother, the Princess of Wales, had imported the same tradition of absolutism from Germany, and had often told her son to be a king.

Any lingering prejudices against the foreign dynasty were dispelled by the young sovereign's public declaration that, "born and bred an Englishman, he gloried in the name of Briton"—a phrase peculiarly calculated to secure the enthusiastic loyalty of his northern subjects. Jacobite gentlemen crowded to his Court, and were received with marked favour. Their new master proved an excellent substitute for the once chivalrous and fascinating Charles Edward, who by this time had degenerated into a brutal drunkard.

The new reign, in fact, amounted to a second Stuart restoration, including guarantees for Protestantism—which, by the way, Charles Edward would also have given—and it soon led to peace with France, the old ally of the Stuarts, the great War Minister, Pitt, being replaced at the head of affairs by a royal favourite, Lord Bute. Peace, though expedient, proved unpopular; and this first triumph over public opinion was followed by a prolonged conflict, in which the King suffered many humiliations. Not until ten years later did he find a Minister to his mind in Lord North. Personal government then had a free hand; but the experiment did not succeed as Bolingbroke had expected. Under the management of George III. a series of disastrous defeats led up to the permanent separation of the chief North American colonies from the mother-country, and to the temporary recognition of an independent Parliament in Dublin. A hostile vote of the House of Commons compelled the King to part with the subservient instrument of his designs, to accept Ministers whom he hated, and to sue for peace to the Powers whom

the elder Pitt had left prostrate at England's feet. As if to put the seal on his discomfiture, the new Administration passed a Bill involving a considerable reduction in the offices and pensions by which the unconstitutional influence of the Crown seemed to have been chiefly maintained.

Nevertheless, in the very year that saw the signature of an ignominious peace with France and her allies, George felt himself strong enough to dismiss a Ministry forced on him by the House of Commons, to bestow office on the younger Pitt, then only twenty-four years old, and to maintain him in that position against a series of hostile Parliamentary votes. What was more, the General Election of 1784 confirmed the King's choice by such an overwhelming majority of the constituencies that his opponents found themselves reduced to political impotence for twenty years to come.

The ostensible reasons for this momentous decision were the details of a Bill for the better government of India, tending, as was alleged, to reserve an enormous amount of patronage for the Whig leaders; and the scandal caused by an unprincipled coalition between Fox, the great Whig orator, and North, the Minister whose American policy he had long denounced in terms of unmeasured vituperation. But it was only reasonable that Indian patronage should be kept out of the hands which had dispensed English patronage with such disastrous effects; and that Fox should ally himself with North seems hardly, if at all, more immoral than that Chatham's son should make himself the instrument of one by whom Chatham's policy of conciliation had been rejected

and Chatham's imperial work undone. In truth, the popular feeling had deeper sources than any interests of the hour. It sprang from a genuine royalism, which in all obscure or doubtful issues inevitably went for the King and against those whom he was pleased to call his enemies.

Two more significant facts may be quoted in attestation of the personal authority exercised by the English monarch at the time of the French Revolution. One is furnished by the American Constitution as finally determined in 1789. The legislators who drew up that instrument evidently designed it as an adaptation of English institutions to the requirements of a new and more democratic society. Now, not only did they place a monarch, under the name of President, at the head of their Federation, but they gave that monarch, during his four years' tenure of office, powers of controlling the Executive and interfering with the Legislature such as George III. rather pretended to than actually possessed.

The other fact is connected with the celebrated Regency debates of 1788. In that year the King was overtaken by a fit of insanity, temporarily incapacitating him for the discharge of his duties, which, had it continued, would have necessitated the appointment of a Regent. The question came before Parliament, and some nice Constitutional questions were raised as to whether the Regency devolved by right of birth on the Heir Apparent or should be conferred on him by special legislation; and on the second alternative what restrictions, if any, should limit his exercise of the royal authority. From first to last the points at issue were debated

on purely party lines, and it was understood throughout that the whole interest of the conflict depended on the undoubted assumption that the Prince of Wales, when invested with his father's authority, would dismiss his father's Ministers, replacing them by the heads of the Whig Opposition. The Prince was known as a drunken and faithless libertine; but it seemed to be agreed on all hands that the majority of the House would transfer their allegiance from Pitt to Fox at his bidding; or that, in the event of a General Election, the constituencies would ratify the policy of the Regent as obediently as they had ratified the directly opposite policy of the King four years previously. In point of fact, a dissolution would have been unnecessary. For we know, on good authority, that in the House of Commons, as then constituted, the party of the Crown numbered 185, Fox's party 138, and Pitt's personal following only 52.[1]

Thus the King was far from being a Venetian Doge. With almost any character or capacity he was the most powerful individual in the country. With a first-rate intellect he would have been an all-powerful and irremovable Prime Minister. Nevertheless, both then and long afterwards the English Constitution might with some reason have been described as an oligarchy. The sovereign both possessed and exercised the right to choose his Ministers, but in practice he had to choose them from among the great governing families and their nominees, and it was by the character of these men as a class that the character of the Government was determined in the long run.

[1] Lord Rosebery's *Pitt*, p. 71.

Much has been written in praise of what is called the English aristocracy; that is, presumably, the titled possessors of hereditary territorial wealth; and sometimes even in foreign countries it is credited with the possession not only of large estates, but also of extraordinary virtues, and more particularly virtues of a political order. Yet, as compared with the hereditary governing classes of ancient Greece and Rome, or even of modern France and Germany, our nobles do not show to advantage as regards intellectual eminence. Up to the period we are now considering they had contributed no name of the first order to English literature, unless Henry St. John is to be counted as an exception. Their services to physical science and erudition do not exceed the limits of respectable amateurship. Two names, Peterborough and Howe, represent their achievements as commanders by land and sea. In the field of statesmanship, where most might have been expected, their sterility is most remarkable. The true makers of England's greatness and vigour—Thomas Cromwell, Cranmer, Burghley, Walsingham, Pym, Oliver Cromwell, Somers, Marlborough, Sir Robert Walpole, Chatham, Clive, Warren Hastings, Burke, Canning, Peel, Cobden, and Gladstone—all sprang from the gentry or the middle classes. On the other hand, our notorious incompetency in negotiating advantageous treaties of peace, although perhaps no misfortune as regards the more solid interests of the country, must be counted to the discredit of a diplomatic service which is peculiarly aristocratic in its composition.

A notion has been sedulously propagated by

modern Tory writers that the Whigs were an eminently oligarchical party, and that men of ability but without aristocratic connections were more systematically excluded from high office by them than by the Tories. But this view is hardly borne out by the facts. High social position was as largely represented in the Cabinets of Lord North and of Pitt as in the Cabinets of their predecessors, if not more largely. Edmund Burke is the standing example of Whig exclusiveness, the truth being that his violent temper would have made him impossible in any Cabinet. After the French Revolution a few outsiders of exceptional talent or ability to please were admitted to high office by the Tory party. This, however, may be explained by its being the party in power—a circumstance which would naturally attract ambitious young men into its ranks, where also the general average of stupidity would make their assistance more desirable. In the eighteenth century what really distinguished the Whigs from the Tories was not their oligarchical tendencies, but their steady opposition to the personal government of the King, to his interference with the choice of Ministers and with the conduct of affairs. For the rest, Toryism appealed more to the landed interest, Whiggism more to the commercial and industrial interests of the country. And in the conflict with America the landowners supported the king in his policy of coercion, while the business classes were for yielding to the demands of the Colonies.

At the same time, it would be a serious mistake to identify the Whigs of those times with what are

now called Liberal principles, with the idea of perpetual progress in speculation and practice, with democratic politics, or with reason as opposed to tradition; still less were the Tories in any sense a party of reaction or conservation, or in any pre-eminent sense a party of order. The Liberal party of our own day is indeed connected by an unbroken chain of development with the Revolution Whigs; while their opponents, by reviving the name of Tory, seem to claim a still more direct filiation from the Jacobites and the King's friends. But this sort of historical continuity does not necessarily involve a continuity of principles. With parties as with all other organisations, the first law of existence is self-preservation, and in obedience to it they may transform themselves almost out of recognition.

It is a familiar commonplace that to be in office tends to foster one set of opinions, while to be in opposition tends to foster the contrary opinions. Under the first Hanoverian Kings the Tories were excluded from power, and this circumstance gave them an individuality, a love of liberty, one may almost say an ideality, which their return to Court favour could not so soon destroy. Johnson, the typical Tory, loved originality, he believed in human progress, he hated West Indian slavery; if he upheld American taxation, it was on grounds of justice. Burke, the great Whig theorist, always appealed to expediency and experience; the sanctities of tradition had no more staunch upholder; his own time even seemed to him degenerate in comparison with the Middle Ages. The younger Pitt was long the idol of the Tory party, the founder

of its glory and success in modern England. But Pitt was no Conservative. The three great measures on which Liberal politicians since his time have successively staked their existence—Catholic Emancipation, Parliamentary Reform, and Free Trade—were his measures. And of these Catholic Emancipation was opposed by the Duke of Portland, Parliamentary Reform by Burke, and Free Trade by Fox; while the first and third were afterwards taken up by Pitt's disciple, Canning.

There is, however, one vital issue with respect to which the lines of party division exhibit a more unbroken continuity than with respect to any other difference of opinion. That is the question of permitting or prohibiting free criticism in politics and religion. As compared with their opponents, the Revolution Whigs had stood more or less for free speech all round; and their prolonged exercise of power had not made them entirely forgetful of the cause they originally represented. Their subsequent exile from office revived those earlier memories; and all through the French revolutionary storm a Whig remnant clung to personal freedom more ardently than ever, now that it had been recognised as not merely the privilege of Englishmen, but as the right of all mankind.

The King and the oligarchs exercised power through Parliament, and in Parliament through the House of Commons. The so-called popular Chamber did not outwardly represent the people. "One hundred and seventy-two of the English and Welsh members were returned on the direct nomination of the Treasury or of individuals. The

forty-five Scotch members were nominated by thirty-five persons. Three hundred and fifty-four members were therefore returned on the recommendation of the Treasury or of some patron."[1] But, although these 354 gentlemen were not elected by the people, it would be a mistake to suppose that they did not represent the people, or that an equal number of members elected by popular suffrage would have been better qualified to sit in the Sovereign Assembly. Merely to occupy such a position gives a sense of responsibility not necessarily associated with the exercise of demagogic arts. Even the Irish Parliament of the eighteenth century, composed as it was of nominees and managed by corruption, had that sense to some extent. Even the servile Corps Législatif of the second Napoleonic Empire successfully resisted a proposal made by its master to entail an estate on the family of one of his favourites, against the law of modern France. And when the Liberal Opposition came to muster very strong in that body they were soon joined by so many supporters of the Government as to form a working majority. The members of our unreformed Parliament no doubt sold their votes. But they would equally have sold them, without losing their seats, under any system of popular suffrage that could have been devised.

In the earlier part of the eighteenth century the Peers were in advance of the Commons, and the Commons were both then and much later in advance of average English opinion. Had the

[1] Spencer Walpole, *History of England from 1815*, vol. i., p. 117 (Cabinet ed.).

borough members of Walpole's age represented the wishes of the urban constituencies as genuinely as the county members represented the feelings of the rural constituencies, the Stuarts would probably have been restored. A century later it is not clear that a reformed Parliament would have passed Catholic Emancipation. What enabled George III. on more than one occasion to carry out a disastrous policy was that he had a majority of the country at his back.

It seems at first sight an optimistic hallucination to maintain that a system full of anomalies, the unintentional and incalculable result of one historical accident after another, should have miraculously turned out to be the best fitted for the people which had somehow blundered into it. But really no more is meant than that the old English Constitution, such as it was, fairly represented the balance of forces then at work; and above all that it organised, in a way, that liberty for the possession and preservation of which our island was famed. And, in fact, such political thinkers as Burke and Canning, in proclaiming the supreme excellence of the Constitution, rotten boroughs and all, dwelt most on the practical experience that it worked well, securing the largest amount of liberty compatible with public order. They failed to see that it fell lamentably short of what a Government ought to be, that it provided neither for social order nor for social progress, that the boasted system of checks and balances was responsible for a paralysis which the people felt obscurely, and that the only hope of salvation lay in the development of the democratic and

freethinking elements whose explosion on the Continent filled them with such dismay.

What we find, then, professing to perform the functions of government is an oligarchy always controlled and sometimes directed by the public opinion of the upper and middle classes. Sometimes opinion embodied itself in a great statesman, sometimes in a king of average judgment and ability who mistook the will of the people for his own will. The result was a moving equilibrium of competing interests, favourable to the development of individual genius; not favourable to orderly progress, to a wise economy of the national resources. So much industry, ability, and money were spent on making the Parliamentary machine work smoothly that nothing was left for securing legislative and administrative efficiency.

A theory had been gaining ground since Locke that the duty of the State goes no further than the protection of its citizens against domestic and foreign aggression. The theory may be good or bad; but, at any rate, the duties it recognises were not fulfilled by the so-called Government of England. There was no police to speak of; the roads were infested with highwaymen, the streets with footpads and pickpockets, the seas with pirates, the avenues of credit with forgers. Groups of irritated interests appealed to their Parliamentary representatives for protection; it was given by extending the death penalty to such a multitude of trivial offences that in many cases the wronged individuals would not prosecute, or juries would not convict, or judges would not condemn, or the

executive would not carry out the sentence, with the result that depredations were multiplied by the chances of impunity; while the prisons, instead of being deterrents or preventives, were so mismanaged as to become nurseries for the propagation of crime and disease.

Foreign aggression being chiefly conceived under the form of foreign industrial competition in the shape of imported goods, it was resisted by prohibitive or protective duties, calling into existence a host of smugglers who introduced the competing products duty free. The division of military authority between the King and the Parliamentary War Minister fatally undermined the efficiency of the army, which, besides, was weak and ill-officered through the whole hierarchy of command. As it happens, fleets cannot be sailed without a relatively high degree of professional ability; and in the case of the English navy the supply, to some extent, corresponded with the demand. The country was guaranteed against invasion, in a military sense, by an Admiralty which seems to have been the best-equipped branch of the public service, and was at least better than any on the Continent. Still, at a great crisis of the national fortunes England's maritime supremacy was nearly wrecked by corruption in high places; while on that and another occasion the national security was still further hazarded by the English Government's insistence on the exercise of certain alleged rights, which the neutral powers united in arms to repel. It remains to add that, as a maritime conscription would have been repugnant to English ideas of liberty, violent

impressment of merchant sailors was used as a means for recruiting the fleet, to the general satisfaction of free-born landsmen.

Not only did the Government fail to provide adequately for public order and safety, but it allowed the machinery of justice to be perverted into a means for the spoliation of its subjects. Viewed from the standpoint of scientific jurisprudence, English civil law was a chaos; as an instrument for filling the coffers of lawyers at the expense of litigants it was contrived with consummate skill; while in applying it to that sinister purpose counsel on both sides might reckon on the cordial co-operation of the judge, for he regarded them as the parties whose interest he sat on the bench to protect.

A secular power that failed to perform the primary duties of government found its appropriate pendant in a spiritual power that could neither edify nor instruct. Through the eighteenth century the Church of England had no other object than to preserve what she had won in the seventeenth century—that is to say, a monopoly of those endowments and privileges, which for the higher clergy meant a position of opulent and dignified idleness, and for the lower clergy a position of indigent and despicable idleness. As a body these men supported every reactionary measure, initiating no reform themselves, and opposing the reforms initiated by others. The great movement for the evangelisation of the people known as Methodism was carried out without their authority and against their wishes.

The universities whose wealth they monopolised were seats neither of learning, nor of research, nor of liberal culture. Controversial writings directed against rationalism were the most imposing clerical performances of the age; but of the two strongest apologists, one, Bishop Butler, had been bred a Dissenter, and the other, Archdeacon Paley, borrowed his arguments from a Dissenting divine, Dr. Lardner.

At the beginning of this chapter it was remarked that political liberty consists in two things—in the subjection of the Government to public opinion exercised through legal channels, and in the unhindered play of individual activity within the limits of mutual respect. Now the development of English individuality was great precisely because the governing powers were so feebly organised. It was this that, in the absence of any steady or coherent system of training and policy, gave England such original statesmen as Chatham, Clive, and Warren Hastings; such party leaders as Bolingbroke, Burke, and Fox; such generals as Marlborough, Peterborough, Clive, Coote, and Wolfe; such religious apostles as Law, Wesley, and Whitefield; such reformers as Bentham and Howard; such a historian as Gibbon; such philosophers as Berkeley, Hume, and Burke; such novelists as Richardson and Fielding; such a humorist as Sterne; such a critic of life as Johnson; such mechanical inventors as Brindley, Hargreaves, Arkwright, and Watt; such explorers as Cook, Bruce, and Mungo Park. On the Continent, also, the eighteenth century was a period of great

individual initiative; but, for one thing, in no Continental country did it attain such a diversified development as here; and, for another thing, there also it owed much to political and social disorganisation, although of a different kind—the sub-division of Italy and Germany among many rulers, the growing contempt for all rule in France, the continual migration of eminent men from one country to another.

This last factor told also for much in the evolution of British genius and thought. Among English men of letters, Swift, Berkeley, Farquhar, Burke, Goldsmith, and Malone were born and educated in Ireland; Steele, Sterne, Francis, and Sheridan were of Irish birth and English education. Toland, the founder of English Deism, was an Irishman of Scotch education; Hutcheson, the founder of Scotch philosophy, was born in Ulster; Hume spent his most studious years in France; and if Adam Smith's six years' residence at Oxford not unnaturally prejudiced him against endowments, it saved him from Hume's prejudice against England; Gibbon first found his true self at Lausanne; Bentham was first revealed to his own countrymen through the French translations of Dumont, a Genevese refugee; Smollett, the first novelist of the English navy, and Boswell, the devoted biographer of England's most characteristic worthy, were Scotchmen born and bred.

This expansion of the English intellect was not directed towards high or ideal ends. Discounting Scotland—whose achievements, belonging as they do to a distinct social organisation, should be

separately estimated—England in the eighteenth century shows conspicuous literary poverty as compared with what the preceding and following ages produced; while in science and philosophy, after the exhaustion of Newton's generation, there came a period of total sterility, followed by a period of gradual recovery due to foreign influences. When the revival comes, it is carried on by the labours of two distinguished amateurs, Cavendish and Priestley, neither of them occupying an official position, and of Sir William Herschel, who was not only an amateur but a foreigner. The last alone formed great and comprehensive views on the constitution of nature. Not until some years after the French Revolution did English men of science rise to the construction of truly philosophical explanations of phenomena.

When we compare this sterility of the higher English intellect with the contemporary achievements of Scotland, considered not merely in reference to the much smaller wealth and population of the northern kingdom, but absolutely, weight for weight; or, again, when we think of what was being done at the same time in France, formerly so far behind England—we cannot but seek for a general cause of the disparity in some difference of social conditions.

The decline of English science has been explained by a continued survival of theological bigotry, with which a further development would have brought it into direct collision. But theological prejudices were then more potent in Scotland and France than among ourselves; nor does there seem any reason why religious beliefs should be more

alarmed by further progress in the higher mathematics, or in physics, chemistry, and natural history, than they had been by the researches of Newton, Boyle, and Ray. Geology was destined to prove a more irreconcilable study; but the speculations of Buffon and Hutton on the subject do not seem to have been hampered by clerical opposition. Moreover, the great religious revival of the eighteenth century, so far from being associated with a further decline of English science, coincided, step by step, with its resuscitation.

We must look for the real cause among more material agencies. Ideal pursuits in general declined because the English intellect was diverted towards the creation and enjoyment of wealth. It was an era of vast territorial expansion, avowedly sought after with a view to the extension of commerce; of great mechanical inventions chiefly intended to facilitate manufacturing industry, of sweeping enclosures made in order to bring fresh soil under cultivation, of corresponding improvements in the means of communication and transport. In reference to this movement, it was no misfortune, but the contrary, that government should be so torpid, that individual initiative should have the freest play where it was most needed, that protectionist legislation should not be aggravated by misguided attempts to supervise the mechanism of industry. Even clerical inertness told as a negative condition of conquest. Clive and Hastings could never have accomplished their great work had a swarm of missionaries been sent out to rouse Oriental fanaticism against the rule of the Feringhees.

It had been believed in the seventeenth century that the new physical sciences imported from Italy and Germany would lead to an immediate and enormous increase of material wealth as well as to new triumphs over death and disease. Except for being premature, the expectation was right, but right only by accident. What Bacon really anticipated has never been accomplished; nor did Newton succeed in the great object of his studies, which was the transmutation of baser metals into gold. With the failure of such hopes English statesmen withdrew their interest from the investigations of the Royal Society. Probably their opinions in the matter are pretty faithfully reflected in Swift's account of the philosophers of Laputa, written, be it remembered, by one who had human well-being passionately at heart, and grudged every intellectual exercise not given to its promotion. But science had now reached a point where it could not be carried further without disinterested love of knowledge on the part of its professors, upheld by a like feeling on the side of the public, nor without considerable endowments from public or private sources. This truth is singularly illustrated by the lives of the only three savants that England for a long period had to show. Cavendish possessed enormous private means; Priestley was first the librarian and afterwards the pensioner of Lord Shelburne; Herschel owed the leisure needed for his observations to the munificence of George III. Maladministration of the public funds left nothing over for the promotion of liberal studies; and the universities, which should have been homes of research, had allowed their professorships to lapse

into sinecures for the additional sustenance of hard-drinking idle Fellows. To draw in as much wealth as possible in the shape of students' fees, and to give as little in exchange for it as possible, was the object of the ruling powers at Oxford and Cambridge. All pass-examinations were made easy, and young lords got their degrees without being examined at all. Scotland and Ireland, being much poorer countries, felt the need of qualifying men to work for their living, and therefore a much more efficient education was given in their universities.

The decline of literature presents a more difficult problem, and any explanations that are offered here must be taken merely as suggestions towards a possible solution. There was, first of all, as with philosophy, science, and scholarship, the diversion of creative genius into the more lucrative channels of politics, business, and mechanical industry, or, failing these, of parasitism on the holders of wealth and power with little taste for the disinterested activities of the spirit. There was, in the next instance, amid the general decline of authority, a most unhappy erection of authority where it was least to be desired—in the field of poetry. This invasion was due to the influence of France, which had set in with the Restoration. The facility and charm of French literature would in any case have made it attractive, and at this period its attractiveness was enormously enhanced by the absence of any rival except the classic literatures of Greece and Rome, which, so far from counteracting it, contributed to the same effect. For the French themselves were

enslaved to the classic tradition of Rome—that is, to the conventions of a literary school artificially brought into existence by the lessons of Greek rhetoricians and of Greek philosophy in its old age. Hence, poetry as expression was tied down to such monotonous metres as lent themselves most readily to the dictation of pedants; while poetry as ideas was made an instrument of instruction, indirectly as a satire on social vices, or directly as a series of elegant platitudes. And this petty didacticism overflowed, to its great detriment, into the realm of prose fiction, where the highest literary originality of the century had sought out a last refuge and defence.

One idea of Greek philosophy proved a saving element in this desert of pedantry and convention —the idea of Nature. It had been the master-thought of Stoicism; and on the downfall of Aristotelian Scholasticism the Stoics once more came to the front as leaders of European thought. Their "natural religion" became the fashionable form of theology, their appeal to nature the watch-word of morality, their dogma of natural rights, and more particularly the right to liberty, the rallying-cry of politics. In taste it took the form —at first not very sincere, but gradually growing more serious—of a preference for rural solitudes to crowded streets, bringing in the idyll as a competitor with the satire, the elegy, and the moral apologue in poetry; in painting, the landscape as a competitor with the portrait; in gardening, the wilderness as at least an adjunct to the trim parterre.

This worship of Nature led to an increased

interest in the common people—who were supposed to be in closer touch with her than the rich—and in uncivilised races; to the study of primitive literatures, chiefly as represented by ballad poetry; and to a re-interpretation of Homer, Shakespeare, and the Hebrew Scriptures as expressions of natural feeling. In this way also the Middle Ages came to attract increased attention, under the impression that simplicity and individuality flourished to a greater extent at that period than in more civilised times. But Romanticism, to call it by its later name, was not then the reactionary movement that it afterwards became when the consequences of the French Revolution threw men back on ideals dissociated from the application of reason to politics and religion. Nor did the mediævalising or Romantic movement at first place itself in conscious opposition to the study of Greek and Roman literature, however much its votaries may have revolted from the spurious classicism of their age. The two enthusiasms harmonised perfectly, the only innovation being a tendency to concentrate attention on the older and greater masters to the exclusion of their later imitators.

The great wave of enthusiasm that flooded English thought and feeling in the late thirties of the eighteenth century, bringing about the fall of Sir Robert Walpole and the rise of the elder Pitt, seems to have flowed partly from the combination of classical with romantic studies, so prominent also a little later in the poetry of Collins and of Gray. And parallel with this somewhat pagan movement we find the great Methodist

revival, less disconnected with it than might seem. For both involved an appeal to popular passion, a return to those primordial sources of inspiration whence the supreme political and religious leaders of other ages have derived their power.

The movement against convention in literature struggled fitfully for half a century before it could make any headway. The emotional and popular movement in religion was more successful. Outside the Church large masses were won over to Methodism. Inside the Church and the Nonconformist bodies, under the name of Evangelicalism, it commanded an ever-increasing number of adherents, and finally became associated with the agitation for the suppression of the slave trade—an agitation, however, first begun and then mainly carried on by the Quakers. The religious revival may also have had something to do with the efforts for prison reform made by Howard, himself a deeply religious character; but it is among the Unitarians rather than the Evangelicals that his chief coadjutors are to be found.

It was natural that English idealism, whatever its inspiration, should concentrate its opposition to English mammonism on the most criminal and scandalous iniquity that had been fostered by our unscrupulous greed. This was the African slave trade. As an important branch of British industry the traffic in human beings dates from the Peace of Utrecht (1713). By a special arrangement between the Crowns of England and Spain, it was then provided that English merchants should have the privilege of importing any number of negroes up

to 4,800 annually for thirty years into the Spanish-American colonies at a fixed duty per head, the profits being equally divided between the Kings of England and Spain. Under cover of this arrangement English goods were smuggled into Spanish territory to such an extent as to provoke a war between the two countries in 1739, when the allotted term had not yet expired. To make up for this deficiency it was provided by the Treaty of Aix la Chapelle that the trade should be resumed for four years more. After that we hear no more about the privilege of supplying slaves as the subject of an express stipulation with Spain. But meanwhile England's own North American colonies had come to provide a far more important market for human flesh, raising the export from Africa to an annual average of 20,000, and in a year of exceptional activity to 50,000.[1] The period following the American War of Independence showed a still further development, the annual average from 1783 to 1793 amounting to 74,000.[2] Of the number torn from their African homes, one in eight died on board ship; if it was desirable in the interests of the owners to lighten the cargo, they could legally be flung overboard like cattle.[3] Of those who reached the West Indies seventeen per cent. "died in about nine weeks, and not more than fifty per cent. lived to become effective labourers in our islands."[4] At the same time the

[1] Cunningham, *Growth of English Industry and Commerce: Modern Times*, p. 317.

[2] Lecky, *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. vii., p. 366 (Cabinet ed.).

[3] *Ibid*, p. 367.

[4] *Ibid*, p. 369.

continuous demand for slaves fomented savage wars between the tribes of the African Continent, reducing its inhabitants to a state of barbarism whence they have not yet recovered.

To our people at home the trade that caused such horrors was a subject of unmixed congratulation. It encouraged English shipping, bringing into the port of Liverpool alone a profit of nearly £300,000 a year.[1] "It took off a considerable amount of English manufactures"; and it conferred a still more considerable indirect benefit on our industry by discouraging the growth of manufactures in the colonies, the effect of slave labour being to confine their industry to planting, with the happy result also of preventing English mechanics from emigrating to North America.[2] Accordingly, when the colonies imposed a heavy duty on the importation of negroes, whose increasing numbers were inspiring them with just alarm, "the law was rescinded by the Crown."[3]

To discourage by such indirect measures the growth of manufacturing industry in America was not enough for the governing classes in England; when certain manufactures came into existence they were forcibly suppressed. The colonies were, indeed, permitted to manufacture pig and bar iron, for in so doing they helped to supply the home industry with the raw material at a cheaper rate; but it was provided that "no mill or other engine for rolling iron, or furnace for making steel, should be permitted."[4] "The manufacture of hats was a flourishing trade, but it was rigorously put

[1] Lecky, vii., p. 366.
[2] Cunningham, p. 315.
[3] Lecky, iv., p. 43.
[4] Lecky, ii., p. 239.

down,"[1] and the exportation of woollen goods from one colony to another was also prohibited.[2] Their sea-borne trade, "so far as the most important articles were concerned, was limited to the British dominions."[3] In Ireland the woollen and glass industries were effectually strangled by trade prohibitions imposed for the benefit of English manufacturers.

Neither in Ireland nor in America was this abuse of power due solely to the covetousness of private interests. It partly arose from the divided and disorganised state of the central Government. The English Parliament did not wish Ireland to prosper lest the Crown, by raising a large revenue from that kingdom, might become independent of their support. And neither Crown nor Parliament wished America to be self-supporting lest she should be enabled to break off her connection with the mother country. As a result of this mismanagement the colonies were lost, while Ireland was preserved only to become a source of future difficulty and danger.

Nowhere was the mingled weakness and strength of England so signally displayed as in her dealings with India. We owe the conquest and retention of that magnificent dependency to the free and enterprising spirit, so characteristic of the English genius, displayed by the servants of the East India Company. But India once won was nearly ruined, first by the unchecked greed of a horde of hungry adventurers suddenly let loose on her inhabitants,

[1] Cunningham, p. 329. [2] *Ibid.* [3] Lecky, ii., p. 238.

then by the administrative chaos resulting from the transfer of party conflicts from London to Calcutta, by the imposition of English law and an English judicature on a people of wholly alien traditions, and a Government jealous of any competing authority, by a new system of landed ownership which converted Hindoo tax-farmers into the likeness of English country gentlemen. Practical unreason reached its climax in the impeachment of Warren Hastings. Hastings was a wise and beneficent ruler, sweet-natured in private life, and popular with the Hindoos. Yet Burke, the great denouncer of Jacobinism, under the stress of party politics anticipated the rant of Jacobin orators in their attacks on the tyrant Capet by reviling him as the common enemy of the human race.

Yet, mistaken as were the Whigs in singling out the greatest benefactor of the Empire for the object of their attack, the attack itself probably led to the better government of India. It certainly excited popular interest in the subject, and was inconsistent with the system of leaving things to take care of themselves.

The policy of letting things alone suffered a remarkable exception in the one case where it might with advantage have been followed; and the genius of the century found its happiest exercise in making war on commercial restrictions. Adam Smith showed in the *Wealth of Nations* that capital and labour were most profitably employed in the ways spontaneously chosen by the self-interest of the parties principally concerned in their application to the production of commodities. By

the simple action of economic causes every individual would be told off to do the work for which he was best fitted by nature; and similarly the inhabitants of every country would take to growing or manufacturing what it was best qualified by circumstances to yield; and an unfettered system of exchange would enable them to supply each other's wants in exact proportion to their respective demands.

Smith's economic theory fell in admirably with the traditions of English liberty as they had been organised by Locke, and justified, on unexpected grounds, the principle that government should be limited to the maintenance of national integrity, public order, and private faith. Where the theory failed was principally in accounting for Adam Smith himself. His book advocates the complete surrender of the higher education to private enterprise—which, according to him, has succeeded admirably in teaching women just what they ought to know—and yet, as a great thinker and teacher, he was essentially a product of the Scotch University system, still further developed by long residence at Oxford, and perfected by the tenure of a professor's chair at Glasgow; while Pitt, one of the first statesmen to put Smith's principles into practice, had been prepared for his great office by long years of studious seclusion at Cambridge.

As regards the education of the people, however, Adam Smith held other views. He considered that it ought not to be left to private enterprise, but that as a matter of public interest it should receive public assistance and direction. In Scotland the want was supplied by an excellent system of

parochial teaching; in England popular education took on a degrading character; and, although the charity schools begun under Queen Anne continued to multiply through the century, a name carrying with it such sordid and repulsive associations was little likely to attract the children of self-respecting parents. Elsewhere Protestantism had at least the good effect of diminishing illiteracy. In this country the division of authority among a number of rival religious bodies, while favourable to religious liberty, proved unfavourable to elementary instruction; indirectly because it weakened the Government, and directly because it fomented jealousies which prevented the different sects from agreeing on a common scheme. And a further obstacle was found in the plutocratic spirit, which deliberately opposed the education of the working classes on the plea that it would unfit them for the performance of manual labour. At a later period the governing classes feared that, if the newspapers were widely read, their own tenure of power would be less secure; while the clergy held, not without reason, that the diffusion of knowledge would be fatal to their Establishment.

As compared, however, with the institutions directly created by law for the benefit of the poor, the charity schools deserve nothing but praise. The system of parochial relief established under Elizabeth had become, from being left to itself, a most calamitous institution. It meant oppression and enslavement to the labourers, civil war under the form of costly litigation to adjoining parishes. For each parish, being chargeable with the maintenance of its poor, tried to shuffle the burden on

to its neighbours, with the result that the actions at law regarding settlements and removals previous to the reform of 1834 seldom cost less than from £300,000 to £350,000 a year.[1] A poor man was not allowed to migrate from the parish to which he belonged without a certificate from the parochial authorities, who could give or withhold it as they pleased. He could be forcibly removed from a parish where he had not obtained a settlement, even without becoming chargeable on the rates; nor could he marry without leave from the authorities. To prevent the growth of a pauper population cottages were pulled down and new ones were not allowed to be built. The aim of the overseer "was to depopulate his parish; to prevent the poor from obtaining a settlement; to make the workhouse a terror by placing it under the management of a bully; and by all kinds of chicanery to keep down the rates at whatever cost to the comfort and morality of the poor."[2]

The parochial system bred a regular slave trade. When the manufacturers wanted labour they got it from the workhouses in the shape of pauper children submitted to their inspection by the overseers, picked out to suit their requirements, and handed over to them "nominally as apprentices, but really as mere slaves, who got no wages, and whom it was not worth while even to feed or clothe properly, because they were so cheap, and their places could be easily supplied. It was often arranged by the parish authorities, in order to get

[1] McCulloch's edition of the *Wealth of Nations*, p. 65, *note*.
[2] Leslie Stephen, *The English Utilitarians*, vol. i., pp. 91–2.

rid of the imbeciles, that one idiot should be taken with every twenty sane children."[1]

All other victims of oppression throughout the Empire who could not help themselves found defenders or advocates in Parliament or in the Press. Voices were raised to plead the cause of the despoiled Hindoo, of the kidnapped African, of the outlawed Catholic, of the Colonial rebel; nor were they raised in vain. But for these little ones, for England's own orphan children, no justice or mercy was ever asked, no plea ever heard, no account ever taken, except indeed as an asset in the national wealth, to increase which they were tortured to death. In their brief passage from the squalid cradle to the nameless grave, without play-time, without Sunday,[2] as much as possible without sleep, they knew neither love nor light nor joy, nor any hope, except, perhaps, hope for the final and everlasting rest, of which they could not be deprived.

The economic principle of *laissez-faire* must not be made responsible for these abuses, nor yet the theory of natural law as opposed to artificial regulation; for nothing can be a greater infringement on individual liberty than making children work without wages, and nothing more unnatural than making them work for eighteen hours a day. Here and everywhere the root of the evil was that the State should abdicate those functions of supervision and control in whose absence delegated authorities are sure to degenerate into instruments of rapacious tyranny.

Bentham, Adam Smith's younger contemporary,

[1] H. de B. Gibbins, *Industry in England*, p. 389. [2] *Ibid.*

in some ways his disciple, and destined to absorb the whole movement started by the great Scotchman into his own school of social reform, was not, like him, a friend to popular liberty, but a Tory, and even an absolutist. This was due in part to early training, but still more to the bias given by his pursuits. His labours had for their object the recasting of England's whole civil and criminal jurisprudence, and he seems to have expected more help towards putting his schemes into execution from the power of the Crown than from the initiative of a governing Assembly. The examples of what had been done by Frederick the Great in Prussia, by Joseph II. in Austria, by Catherine II. in Russia, by Charles III. in Spain, by Pombal in Portugal, and of what might have been done with autocratic power by Turgot in France, were well fitted to encourage such a belief. At any rate, Bentham's sympathies went neither with the revolted colonists in America nor with the revolutionists in France. Late in life his hopes were fixed on a purely democratic legislature as the most promising instrument of reform; but he never believed, any more than Burke did, in liberty as a natural right, nor, indeed, in natural rights of any kind; and his passion for submitting human conduct to a system of minute regulation put him out of sympathy with the spirit of liberty as such. *Laissez-faire* had, in fact, no more than an accidental and transitory connection with Bentham's school; and we shall be prepared to recognise, against the general opinion, how much his disciples had to do with the great constructive and centralising reforms of a later day.

Before closing this chapter a few words must be added in reference to the great religious movement which had been in progress for fifty years before the French Revolution. In no sense a reaction against the Deism which preceded it, but rather an upheaval of popular ignorance and superstition through the upper crust of society, it was represented outside the Establishment by the two divergent sects of Methodism, and within the Establishment by what has been called the Evangelical succession, from John Newton to Henry Venn, in literature by Cowper, in politics latterly by Wilberforce. The movement was essentially pietistic—that is, it strove to draw off men's attention from the interests of the present life and of this world to the destinies that awaited them after death. Practically it made for a severe, almost ascetic morality, for charitable attention to sufferers, and for at least one act of public beneficence—the abolition of the slave trade. On the other hand, most of its leaders took the reactionary side in politics; while their frugal habits, by promoting the accumulation of capital, indirectly promoted that love of money for its own sake which had already proved so unfavourable to the higher idealism in England. Some of the Cambridge Evangelicals were scholars and mathematicians; but the approaching development of science, criticism, and literature in a sense opposed to the old dogmatic theology was certain to be strenuously resisted by their disciples. Already, indeed, faith and reason were tending to draw apart. John Wesley was grossly superstitious; Cowper's naturally large and liberal mind was thrown completely off its balance by a logical

application of his Calvinistic convictions. The highest intellect of England was becoming hostile or indifferent to what had nothing stronger than mysticism or tradition in its favour.

Chapter II.

THE GODS ARRIVE

The first effect of the French Revolution on English society, when its full significance became appreciated, was to give all existing tendencies a more excited self-consciousness, a clearer appreciation of their true principles and ultimate goals. There had been for some time past a number of Englishmen who combined democratic politics with a philosophic theory of human progress and free-thinking views about religion. A few of them were opposed to the perpetuity of the marriage-bond. What was happening in Paris seemed to open out a more immediate prospect for the realisation of their ideals than could have been hoped before. From that moment English Radicalism, as a more or less definite creed and party, came into existence, and has continued active ever since. Their sympathy with the French people gave the Radicals a rallying-point and a sign for mutual recognition; but it would be a mistake to suppose that they drew any peculiar inspiration from the ideas of Voltaire, of Rousseau, or of the Encyclopédists. Mary Wollstonecraft has been called a disciple of Rousseau, but in advocating the higher education and political enfranchisement of women she directly contravenes the teaching of his *Émile*. In theory the French Jacobinism founded on

Rousseau's *Contrat Social* stood for absolute government exercised by the numerical majority of the adult male population; in practice it stood for absolute government exercised by a small ring falsely claiming to represent the people. Godwin's *Political Justice,* on the other hand, is in some ways a gospel of anarchy without the constable; it altogether condemns coercion, and proposes that the business of society should be carried on entirely by reasoning, just as in William Morris's *News from Nowhere.* In practice Godwin objected even to the party system in politics as an irrational surrender of one's own individual judgment to the control of others. Here we have the old spirit of English liberty asserting itself under an extreme form without a parallel in France, but preceded in Germany by a similar manifesto from the pen of Wilhelm von Humboldt.

A more opportune and practical result of the Revolution was a revival of the agitation for Parliamentary Reform. Chatham, to whom popular support meant everything, had long since proposed to place the representation of the people on a broader basis; and the younger Pitt had three times attempted to carry out his father's ideas, on the last occasion as Prime Minister at the head of a powerful following. But neither the King nor the majority of the House would support him; and the country seems to have been either indifferent or inert. His scheme involved no more than a redistribution of seats without any extension of the franchise. The Duke of Richmond had gone very much further, proposing universal suffrage, equal electoral districts, and annual Parliaments; and

the same extreme position was adopted on the ground of natural right by the democratic societies founded after the French Revolution.

Burke had argued passionately against Pitt's very moderate Reform Bill; the more advanced democratic theories almost threw him into hysterics. Dr. Price had compared the revolt of the French people against despotism with the expulsion of James II. from England a hundred years before. Not content with pointing out the very important points of contrast between the modes of action respectively adopted by the two nations on those occasions, Burke proceeded to lay down principles of political philosophy which would make all progress impossible, and certainly would not justify the methods by which the relation of the Church to the State and of the King to Parliament were finally reconstituted in England. While very properly repudiating theories of abstract right and replacing them by an appeal to expediency as the supreme arbiter in practical issues, he fails to see that there are times—and the time when he wrote was one of them—when revolutionary methods are alone expedient: because alone possible, as a means of deliverance from intolerable suffering. And he also fails to see that the appeal to natural rights, however fallacious in its absolute extension to all times and places, had at that particular crisis, nor at that alone, a relative justification on the narrowest grounds of expediency, as the only rallying-cry by which multitudes of famishing human beings could be brought together to act as one man.

The truth is that Burke looked on any attempt

to remodel the existing state of things as something very like an impious interference with the divinely appointed order of nature. Politically he had always been a Conservative. In standing up for the Whig families and their system of party government against the personal rule of George III., in resisting the imposition of imperial taxation on America, in upholding the immunities of the native Hindoo princes against Warren Hastings, his motive had been respect for established usage. And now this reverence for ancient prescription had gained strength by being brought into relation with his equally steadfast religious convictions. The appeal to natural right in France had been preceded by an appeal to the religion of nature against revelation, latterly passing into an appeal to natural science against supernatural theology in every form ; nor did it justify the Freethinkers in Burke's eyes that their attacks had been primarily directed against the Roman Catholic Church, for it had been the Church of his mother. The secularisation of Church property by the National Assembly had, in his opinion, been one of their worst crimes. To find the Revolution assuming a more and more anti-clerical aspect must have more and more confirmed his identification of democracy with atheism ; and the sympathy of the leading English Unitarians with France would illustrate the sinister tendencies of any departure from the traditional orthodoxy.

If the revolutionists, with their doctrine of abstract rights, were in what Auguste Comte calls the metaphysical stage of social science, Burke is still less advanced ; he remains in the theological

stage. The nearest approach to political Positivism had been made by Bentham with his doctrine of utility.

It may be said that prediction is the test of truth, and that Burke's principles were verified by the fact of their having enabled him to foretell the future course of the Revolution. But to anticipate the coming Terror and the final subjection of France to a military despot needed no extraordinary sagacity. The known character of the French people, read in conjunction with the lessons of Thucydides and Plutarch and the omens of 1789, were enough to suggest the most dismal prophecies of democratic excess; while Cromwell's career was there as a warning to all men of what a violent revolution must necessarily bring about. And, in fact, before the *Reflections* appeared Lafayette, of all men, had been pointed to as the coming dictator.

To say that the fated enslavement of France when it came would be exceptionally rigorous, because every barrier to tyranny had been levelled by the National Assembly, was no doubt an acute observation. But in Burke's mouth it has only the merit of a new application. For Montesquieu had already said of the English that, if they once lost their liberty, no people on earth would be so enslaved, for want of those great ecclesiastical and legal corporations which in other countries were interposed between the sovereign and his subjects. In point of fact, the remark was quite untrue of England, and very imperfectly true of France. Napoleon only maintained his tyranny at the cost of continual wars; and the same administrative

machinery in the hands of his successor proved quite insufficient to keep the spirit of liberty permanently under.

Where Burke was original, where he trusted to the guidance of his peculiar political philosophy, events proved him utterly wrong. So far from ruining France, the Revolution raised her within a few years to an unprecedented height of military power; within a generation her population had grown twenty-five per cent., with a more than proportionate augmentation of wealth—a rate of increase never known before; within two generations it inspired a literature and a philosophy richer and more splendid than that of her Augustan age. All who have read the *Reflections* will recognise how much the contrary of what Burke expected these results have been.

There is, however, a sense in which this great man may more truly be called a prophet, and truly transcended his age. He created Conservative philosophy—in other words, he constructed the theoretical barriers that have ever since been used to shut out political reforms of every kind. No other thinker has so well exhibited the subtlety, complexity, and obscurity of the forces by which societies are bound together, or the incalculable consequences to be expected from their paralysis; no one else has made more of the traditions by which the present is interwoven with and grows out of the past.

Burke also led the way in basing his hostility to democracy on the danger to property of a wide suffrage, and the necessity of property to the stability of society. But both he and his followers

erred by an imperfect appreciation of what they saw. The forces of social cohesion are too strong to lie at the mercy of revolutionists, as France soon proved by recovering her unity and balance far more quickly than after the troubles of the sixteenth century, when religion reigned supreme. The security of private property, too, has proved much greater and much more independent of political organisation than Burke imagined. The propertied classes have shown a singular knack of coming to the top after every revolution and under every form of government; while the wide diffusion of landed property among the community, where it has been effected, seems to make for rather than against the conservative spirit.

Another achievement of Burke's was to capture the Romantic movement for Conservatism, to associate the maintenance of existing institutions with a distrust of modern civilisation, a reactionary enthusiasm for the ideals of mediæval chivalry. There had till then been no such association. Walpole, a leader in the Romantic movement, was a Whig; and its great enemy, Johnson, a Tory of modern tastes. The Revolution, as a revolt against mediæval institutions, tended to unite all mediæval sympathies in an alliance against it.

Among the replies to Burke, Mackintosh's *Vindiciæ Gallicæ* won great celebrity for its author at the time, but is now never read, and only remembered as an instance of his political instability, for in a few years he became a convert to Burke's philosophy, and before the end of the

century was attacking with extreme violence in his public lectures what he conceived to be the principles of the Revolution. Mackintosh was pre-eminently a historical scholar, and his favourite studies had supplied him with two guiding ideas. One was the essential mutability of all human institutions; the other was the relative adaptation of all institutions to the circumstances in which they have originated. It will be observed that this is merely a more specific way of saying that institutions are evolved in response to the conditions of their environment; and, in fact, we owe to this writer the famous aphorism that constitutions are not made, but grow. It is said to have done the cause of Continental liberty incalculable harm, and certainly, if taken literally, would have destroyed it. The analogy between institutions and organisms does not really go very far; and, where they differ, institutions are immeasurably the more adaptable of the two. The reason is very simple: societies of human beings are capable of re-arranging their structures in conscious accordance with the lessons of experience, and especially they have a power of conscious imitation which plants and animals have not. Representative government and trial by jury may or may not be good things, but, at any rate, they are easy things to copy, and actually have been copied by nations from whose traditions they were widely removed—sometimes receiving improvements from the imitator which might be advantageously adopted by the original model. All imitations, to be successful, imply, of course, a certain degree of civilisation on the part of those who adopt them; and it may be truly said of certain

communities that they are not fit for self-government as we understand it; but it might be said of others with equal truth that they are not fit for steam engines, which nevertheless it would be absurd to count among the things that are not made, but grow.

Mackintosh preserves so much of his early Liberalism as to make liberty the object of all government.[1] But then he defines liberty as security against wrong. In this way he keeps up the metaphysical illusion of his opponents under a more confused form. They made liberty a right; he turns rights into modes of liberty. Oddly enough, with his historical view of government pushed, as we have seen, to the extreme of evolutionary conservatism, he combines the genuinely metaphysical notion that there are no discoveries in morality, instancing in support of his position the Pentateuchal legislation, which accepts slavery, polygamy, and blood revenge as things of course. What he wanted was probably to form a coalition of moralists in all ages against the excesses of the Revolution.

Notwithstanding its inauspicious title, Thomas Paine, in his pamphlet on *The Rights of Man,* is sometimes more modern-minded than either Burke or Mackintosh. The first part of that work is chiefly occupied with a historical vindication of the French people, and does not concern us here. The second part is an argument for abolishing the English monarchy and putting a republic in its

[1] *Miscellaneous Works,* vol. i., p. 372.

place—an utterly impracticable proposal, and more likely at that time to hamper than to help the cause of reform. Paine had done much by his other great pamphlet, *Common Sense,* to persuade the American colonists to organise themselves as an independent republic; and on the occasion of Louis XVI.'s flight to Varennes he had vainly urged the French people to follow their example. The good effect of taking his advice in the one case, and the bad effect of not taking it in the other, may have inspired him with too much confidence in his favourite panacea. After all, Burke and Pitt were still more fatally blind to political realities when they tried to destroy the new French Government by force of arms.

Apart from cheap criticism, the interesting thing is to note what was Paine's idea of government, irrespective of its form. "It is," he tells us, "nothing more than a national association; and the object of this association is the good of all, as well individually as collectively. Every man wishes to pursue his occupation and to enjoy the fruits of his labour and the produce of his property in peace and safety, and with the least possible expense. When these things are accomplished all the objects for which governments ought to be established are answered."[1] The phrase "fruits of labour" is open to conflicting interpretations, and is understood by some who have adopted it in the sense of a collectivist organisation of industry. But this is very unlikely to have entered Paine's thoughts; so far we may class him as an individualist like

[1] *Rights of Man,* Part II., p. 60 (first ed.).

Mackintosh. Nevertheless, his criticisms on the actual Government of England, and still more his suggestions for its reform, imply a strong leaning to what would now be called socialism. It is, he complains, "so absorbed by foreign affairs and the means of raising taxes that it seems to exist for no other purpose. Domestic concerns are neglected; and with respect to regular law there is scarcely such a thing."[1] "When we see old age going to the workhouse and youth to the gallows, something must be wrong in the system of government."[2] "Civil government does not consist in executions, but in making that provision for the instruction of youth and the support of age as *(sic)* to exclude, as much as possible, profligacy from the one, and despair from the other."[3]

Accordingly he proceeds to offer a scheme for old-age pensions, and another for universal elementary instruction; the cost to be provided by an enormous reduction in the present establishment, and by a progressive income-tax on landed property, amounting, in the case of large estates, to something like fifty per cent. The needs of elementary education are to be met by a truly English system of subsidies; that is, by a grant of so much per child, with orders to the parish officials to see that it is sent to school. On the other hand, no provision is made for schools or teachers. A few old people in every village will readily come forward to meet the new demand, and will be perfectly qualified for the office.[4]

Paine was prosecuted for high treason, and in all

[1] *Rights of Man*, p. 56. [2] P. 90. [3] *Ibid.* [4] P. 132.

probability only escaped death by a timely retreat to France. He was tried in his absence by a special jury, found guilty, and outlawed. But by the end of the following year (1793) 200,000 copies of the *Rights of Man* had been sold; and the number would probably have been much greater had not the sale been made penal.

With the execution of Louis XVI. a royalist reign of terror began in England, having for its object to suppress the utterance of liberal opinions in print or even by word of mouth. John Frost, an attorney, exclaimed in a public room: "I am for equality and no King!" He was tried, found guilty, sentenced to six months' imprisonment in Newgate, to stand for one hour in the pillory at Charing Cross, and to find security for his good behaviour for five years; his name was also struck off the roll of attorneys. The part of the sentence relating to the pillory was not executed—according to Frost himself, from fear of the populace. "William Winterbotham, a Dissenting minister at Plymouth," was alleged to have "preached two sermons in which he instructed his auditory that the laws were not equal, the application of public money corrupt and vicious; that the people of this country had as much right as those of France to stand up for their liberty; that the King had no title to the throne any more than the Stuarts had, and that it was time for the people to come forward in defence of their rights." Several persons swore that they were present and heard no such words; nevertheless, the preacher was found guilty, and sentenced to be fined £200 and to be imprisoned for four

years.[1] This was in 1793. In the following year Horne Tooke and several other persons were prosecuted for high treason, substantially on the ground that they belonged to a society for obtaining Parliamentary reform; but juries could not be got to find them guilty.

Other methods of coercion were then adopted, placing the right of public meeting, and even the right to open reading-rooms and circulating libraries, under magisterial control; while the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act from 1794 to 1800 enabled the Government to imprison its critics for any length of time without a trial, and to treat them, "when in confinement, with shameful severity."[2] "The stamp and advertisement duties were increased; more stringent provisions made against unstamped publications; and securities taken for ensuring the responsibility of printers."[3] "Printers and booksellers all over the country were hunted out for prosecution."[4] In order to procure evidence against the reformers, "society was everywhere infested with espionage";[5] a watch being set even on the metaphysical conversations of Coleridge and Wordsworth.

In Scotland the policy of repression was exercised with much greater severity, four persons being sentenced to fourteen years', and a fifth to seven years', transportation, because they had agitated for Parliamentary reform. Pitt gave it as his opinion that the judges would have been highly culpable

[1] Adolphus, *History of England,* vol. v., pp. 528–9.
[2] Buckle, *History of Civilisation in England,* vol. i., p. 449 (2nd ed.).
[3] May, *Constitutional History of England,* vol. ii., p. 172.
[4] Buckle, p. 447. [5] May, p. 289.

had they shown more lenity to the prisoners, and the House of Commons approved of their conduct by an enormous majority.

At this time the men who ruled England seem to have become animated by an actual love of slavery as such. This is no metaphor, no exaggeration. Begun in 1787, the movement for abolishing the slave-trade had gained the approval of George III.; the question was brought before Parliament at the suggestion of Pitt, who powerfully supported abolition, and resolutions in its favour were passed by a unanimous vote in 1789. But in the spring of 1791 it was rejected in the House of Commons by a majority of two to one, and by the end of the year "the King had become strongly opposed to a measure which would be approved by the Jacobins. His opposition made it impossible that the question should be taken up by the Ministry."[1] Besides the unfortunate fact that the Jacobins disapproved of the slave-trade, a negro insurrection in San Domingo helped to complicate the situation. Any reasonable human being would have looked on this incident as an additional argument against a system that went to increase the servile population of the West Indies; and it was accordingly pressed in that sense by Wilberforce. The general effect, however, was to "cool public feeling on the subject, and Pitt's zeal manifestly declined."[2] His colleagues, Dundas, Thurlow, and Jenkinson, showed zeal enough—but it was zeal for the trade; and in the House of Lords the Duke of Clarence, afterwards William IV., stood foremost

[1] *Dictionary of National Biography,* vol. lxi., p. 211.
[2] Lecky, vol. v., p. 341.

among those who fought against its abolition. The usual arguments urged for the continuance of man-stealing were regard for the commercial prosperity of England, and that other nations would take up the trade if we abandoned it. To which Fox replied that no gain would justify such a crime, and that highway robbery might be defended on the same plea. For their final victory the abolitionists were indebted to him, although it was not won till after his death. It might have been indefinitely postponed had Pitt lived ; and, as it was, the trade more than doubled under his administration.

It is the chief glory of Pitt's life that he was most unwilling to engage in a war with revolutionary France, and only entered on it under compulsion. How that compulsion ultimately took effect still remains a controverted question—whether it came more from the reactionary fanatics of England, or from the regicidal fanatics of the Convention; or from neither of these, but from a blindly disastrous combination of circumstances. But it is beyond doubt that the first provocation came from Burke ; that Burke wished for war long before it was declared, and that, once begun, he wished it to be carried on until the Republic was destroyed. And it is equally certain that Pitt, when he consented to fight, fought, at least ostensibly, against what he called Jacobinism in the same spirit of implacable hostility as Burke, one of his ablest colleagues, Windham, holding that the restoration of the Bourbons was the object of the war.[1]

[1] *Dictionary of National Biography,* vol. lxii., p. 174.

An Irish rebellion, provoked by the incompetence and mismanagement of the English oligarchy, occurred in 1798, and was put down with a severity accompanied by every circumstance of undiscriminating atrocity. True, these horrors were inflicted on Irish victims by Irish ruffians; but they were condoned by Pitt and the King. Lord Moira brought the matter twice before the House of Lords. "The Government refused to credit his account, or to interfere with the measures taken by the Irish Ministers to suppress the rebellion."[1] Two years later the very limited amount of self-government that Ireland possessed was taken from her by the lavish use of corruption, coupled with a promise of Catholic emancipation, which was not fulfilled.

Thus England, after taking rank fifty years before as the most glorious representative of European liberty, seemed at the end of the eighteenth century to have become its most determined foe, at home and abroad, in its highest developments and in its most elementary forms, lending to the cause of its oppression what had begun as the most potent instruments of its maintenance and extension—the supreme eloquence of Burke and the supreme energy of Pitt.

Immunity from resistance or criticism, concentration of all the national resources under one hand, and command of unprecedented wealth, had not created military power, nor given our aristocracy victory in the field. Warfare by subsidised coalitions did as

[1] *The Political History of England*, 1760–1800, p. 406.

little for the destruction of the enemy abroad as government by the corrupt management of competing interests did for the instruction of the people at home. Prussia took Pitt's money, and deserted him to secure her share in the partitionment of Poland. Austria took it, and fought his battles without success, until the more substantial bribe of Venetia reconciled her to an ignominious peace. As to the English troops, it is enough to say that they were placed under the command of the Duke of York, an utterly incapable general, for no better reason than that he was the King's son. When at last Pitt insisted on his supersession, George III. declared himself "very much hurt."[1] We shall see later on what sort of figure His Royal Highness made as Commander-in-Chief.

An abler commander than the Duke could perhaps not have done much better with the materials at his disposal. The officers were uneducated and the men undisciplined. It is remarkable that the only two generals who much distinguished themselves during the first French War—Sir Ralph Abercrombie and Sir John Moore—were both Scotchmen and both trained abroad. They divide the glory of having restored the old traditions of the British army and prepared the way for its Peninsular triumphs.

During the same period five great victories at sea carried England's naval reputation to the highest pitch it had yet reached, rivalling the glories of the French army, and showing Nelson

[1] *Political History, ut supra,* p. 362.

as the first sailor even more indisputably than Napoleon is the first soldier in history. Naval warfare, perhaps more than any other field, offers an opportunity for the exercise of that individuality which English liberty has done so much to develop, and of which Nelson is a supreme example. Nor was liberty alone the secret of our victories. The same democratic principle that made her rival so successful by land made England equally successful by sea—the principle of *la carrière ouverte aux talens*. Of our naval heroes Howe alone was nobly born ; the Hoods and Jervis were middle-class men ; Nelson, Collingwood, and Duncan came of good but untitled families, English or Scotch. The hardships of a sea life acted as a tolerably effective barrier in keeping out the idle, luxurious, and brainless young gentlemen by whom the other services used to be infested. But the Admiralty was in aristocratic hands, and its maladministration provoked a mutiny in the fleet which, occurring at a critical moment, put the existence of the Empire in peril.

Those years of oppression and military disaster were signalised by an extraordinary revival of British literature and science. Since the close of the American War very few books of permanent value had been written by Englishmen ; and those who wrote what is still held to be worth reading were rather the survivors of an old than the inaugurators of a new time. "Poetry," as Macaulay observes, "had fallen into such utter decay that Hayley was thought a great poet." In fiction Fanny Burney passed for a prodigy.

English science was almost concentrated in Priestley, and was almost wrecked in the destruction of his books and apparatus by a Church-and-King mob. English philosophy, what little there was of it, lay buried in the manuscripts of Bentham. The Revolution seemed at first sight likely to increase this alienation from imaginative and speculative interests, in its commencement by offering the spectacle of a drama with which no fiction could compete, and in its later developments as the cause of agonising terrors for what so great a portent might bring forth. Only when those early hopes were dashed and those premature alarms appeased did the stimulus begin to take effect, and the energies that found no practical outlet begin to be turned into the channels of ideal emotion.

All the chief animating tendencies of what was to be the new literature had been at work long before 1789. A revived romanticism, noticed with alarm by Shaftesbury, had already begun under Queen Anne. There was genuine observation of nature in Thomson, enthusiasm for Greece in Collins, sense of reality in Cowper; all these together, combined with a new curiosity about Northern sagas, in Gray. The fertile *motif* of foreign travel had been successfully cultivated by Goldsmith. Yet these velleities of innovation, after a more or less prolonged struggle, had succumbed to the tyranny of convention ; and even in Cowper, or rather most of all in Cowper, the didactic had reasserted its sway.

Sympathy with American freedom did something to loosen the conventional yoke, but only the French Revolution could finally break it. The

first tendency to profit by the release was Romanticism. In this instance, however, the French influence was not unmixed ; republican ideas associated themselves more readily with Hellenic than with mediæval traditions. But it so happened that the first revelation of German literature came to England simultaneously with the first enthusiasm for France's political regeneration. At that time Unitarians either took the lead or followed closely on every new departure. William Taylor, of Norwich, who belonged to a Unitarian set, was the first Englishman to make a systematic study of German poetry, while also making himself prominent in the proceedings of the Revolutionary Society, a mildly Jacobin body. His translation of Bürger's *Lenore* (1790) first fully awoke the genius of Scott. Another young Englishman, Matthew Lewis, after learning German at seventeen, visited Weimar and was introduced to Goethe in 1792. Two years later he read Schiller's *Robbers,* and wrote a romantic story called *The Monk.* Visiting Edinburgh in 1798, he met Scott, encouraged him to translate from the German, and found him a publisher. Lewis himself had been stimulated by Ann Radcliffe's romance, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). Both this and its successor, *The Italian,* won enormous popularity, and bear witness to the sudden revolution in taste. Blake's *Poetic Sketches*, published in 1783, are deeply penetrated with the romantic spirit ; but their complete failure at the time shows how much the Revolution had to do with their ultimate success. Blake himself sympathised ardently with the Revolution, and his best poetic work, the

Songs of Experience, was evidently produced under its inspiration.

If by romanticism we are to understand the excitement of emotion by the imaginative presentation of extraordinary events, more particularly those of a really or apparently supernatural character, then unquestionably the chief, or rather the only, great poet of the school at its first beginning was Coleridge. On him the action of the French Revolution was intense, while the influence of German literature, as poetry, seems to have counted for nothing; for, though he read and admired Schiller's *Robbers* in an English translation, it can hardly have left a trace on the development of his genius. When he visited Germany it was to study not literature, but philosophy; and his most vital work in poetry was done before he went there, *The Ancient Mariner, Christabel,* and *Kubla Khan* having all been written in 1797. It may be noticed also in this connection that the first literary result of Coleridge's residence in Germany, his translation of Schiller's *Wallenstein,* had no success with the English public until several years later, no doubt because its classic form seemed out of keeping with the prevalent romantic taste.

Wordsworth and Coleridge were at first closely united by mutual admiration, by a common enthusiasm for the Revolution, by common studies in philosophy, and by a common dislike for the school of Pope; moreover, their association in the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* gave an impression that they represented a common literary movement. This, however, was a mistake; and, in fact, their

poetic methods were widely different. Realism is not romance, and Wordsworth was a realist. He took up and carried to a much higher power the naturalist current of eighteenth-century poetry; that is, the direct representation of elementary feeling, and of the scenes where such feeling is most freely displayed, depicted by preference under their most enduring aspects. And for this choice of subject and method French influence is to be thanked. The Revolutionists had sought to carry Rousseau's gospel of nature into effect; and when their aspirations were or seemed to be defeated, nature remained as an ideal refuge until the return of better times.

By a remarkable coincidence, the year 1797, which saw the publication of Ann Radcliffe's second great romance, *The Italian,* saw also the completion of Jane Austen's masterpiece, *Pride and Prejudice,* swiftly followed by *Sense and Sensibility* and *Northanger Abbey,* although not one of the three appeared in print until several years later. Of these novels the last-named is a direct protest against romanticism; and the same animus is present, although slightly veiled, in the second also. All three are reproductions, so far as they go, of actual contemporary life. No one would accuse Miss Austen of being a revolutionist; yet without the Revolution I question whether these novels would have been written. Her style is correct and temperate, but also to an extraordinary degree curt, direct, and trenchant. The epithets "exquisite" and "delicate" have been consecrated to her service with a stupid monotony which seems to show that the critics have failed to

recognise what is still more characteristic—her energy and decision. The word of command from the lips of a Nelson or an Arthur Wellesley could not be more peremptory or to the point. She breathes the air of a new time, demanding the swiftest resolutions in council, the most unwearied fortitude in execution. There is energy enough in the imperious self-assertion of Elizabeth Bennet and the headlong passion of Marianne Dashwood to furnish out a hundred heroines of later English fiction. And, with all Miss Austen's contempt for the vulgar *bourgeoisie,* there is something in the victory of Elizabeth over Darcy, as long afterwards in the victory of Fanny Price over the Crawfords and Bertrams, suggesting the rise of a new power before which the aristocracy of birth was destined to succumb.

Maria Edgeworth belongs to the same period as Jane Austen, and, like her, represents an intenser development of the earlier realism entering into rivalry with romance, illustrated by the same qualities of energy and decision in style. Her name has become identified with a didactic tendency characteristic of the whole century that gave her birth. But that tendency had also been powerfully stimulated by the Revolution, and is found mingling strangely with the visionary raptures of Blake and Coleridge no less than with the philosophic reveries of Wordsworth. One of the *Songs of Experience* is about a little sweep; *The Ancient Mariner* is a protest against field sports, *Peter Bell* a plea for humanity to the most despised and ill-treated of domesticated animals. Such teachings have obviously democratic affinities; and, as if to

point the contrast with aristocratic fashions, Windham, the model of an English gentleman, defended bull-baiting in Parliament.

The period from the Revolution to the Peace of Amiens is no less rich in scientific than in literary promise. Those years saw the first public appearance of Dalton, who constituted meteorology as a science, and to whom we owe the theory of atomic equivalents which is the basis of modern chemistry; of Davy, who analysed the alkalis into their elements, and proved by experiment the dynamic nature of heat; of Young, who discovered the phenomenon of optical interference, thereby placing the undulatory theory of light on an experimental basis; of William Smith, who founded stratigraphy by his laborious geological survey of England and Wales, and fixed its method by using the fossils found in rocks as a means of determining their relative antiquity. It was also in the middle of this period (1794–6) that Erasmus Darwin published his *Zoonomia,* in which Lamarck's theory of organic evolution is anticipated. Finally, the foundation of the Royal Institution, which gave Davy and Young an opportunity for expounding their great discoveries to popular audiences, falls in the year 1797.

It is to be observed that the English scientific work of the new age not only exceeds what had gone before it in amount, but also, and to a still greater extent, in quality. Cavendish and Priestley count only as discoverers of isolated facts, Priestley even remaining all his life obstinately wedded to a false chemical theory. Dalton, Davy, and Young were

as great theorists as they were experimentalists; Erasmus Darwin and William Smith gave science new methods of research.

The causes of this great and sudden expansion are more difficult to trace than the conditions of the literary revival which accompanied it. That it was connected with the Revolution seems highly probable, but in what way the connection came about is not obvious. It must be noted first of all that the leaders in the new science were without exception amateurs, and as such illustrate the characteristic individualism of the English intellect—an individualism likely to be still further accentuated in Dalton and Young by the fact of their being Quakers, and in Davy by his receiving lessons in science from a Quaker; and this independent character would be still further encouraged by the revolutionary environment. But why should so much of the newly-awakened energy discharge itself along the lines of physical investigation? I can only suggest that this happened because those ideal aspirations which the Revolution excited were debarred from seeking an outlet in political activity, partly by the conversion of the Revolution itself into a war of conquest and spoliation, partly by the repression of all reforming agitation in England under Pitt. It is noticeable, in this connection, that Macaulay has explained the analogous rise of English science after the Restoration by a diversion of energy from political to physical inquiries.

Another factor in the situation was the impoverishment of the country caused by Pitt's war-expenditure, diverting, as this did, large masses of capital from productive to unproductive

employment, besides imposing an oppressive load of taxation on the middle classes. Now, if it be true that an absorbing devotion to material interests was responsible for England's literary and scientific decline, it is at least possible that this subsequent depletion of wealth may have restored some of her best energies to the pursuit of more ideal ends.

At a time when France enjoyed undisputed supremacy in European science we might expect to find her influence at work in the revival of English science. But in this instance the French example does not seem to have counted for much. It is at least remarkable that the English were weakest where the French were relatively strongest —that is, in pure mathematics and biology. What we learned from them in these studies was learned at a much later period. Meanwhile America was, perhaps, more helpful. At any rate, it was Franklin's electrical discoveries that first roused Priestley's emulation ; and the Royal Institution was founded by an American, the brilliant and versatile Count Rumford.

In 1798 appeared the greatest single contribution to social science made since *The Wealth of Nations,* and one not surpassed in importance ever since. This was the famous *Essay on Population,* by Thomas Malthus, an English clergyman. Its origin is closely connected with the political circumstances of the time. As a consequence, presumably, of the distress caused by the American War, an amendment to the Poor Law, passed in 1782, and known as Gilbert's Act, "abolished the workhouse test and provided work for those who

were willing near their homes."[1] In 1796, at a period of much greater distress, the justices who had taken the place of the old Poor Law Guardians were "empowered to give relief to any industrious poor person at his own residence."[2] Thus it came to pass that "the labourers' wages were systematically made up out of the rates";[3] and as the allowance was increased in proportion to the number of children, not excluding bastards, a direct stimulus was given to the increase of the population, in perfect accordance with the apparent interests of the manufacturers and farmers, who wanted cheap labour, and of the Government, which wanted cheap food for powder, not to speak of the Tories, who wanted cheap philanthropy. Paley, the official moralist, held that happiness is equally diffused among all classes of society, and that its "quantity in any country is best measured by the number of the people."[4] Malthus was of a different opinion, while at the same time supporting Pitt's Poor Law Bill, whose ulterior consequences he seems not at first to have perceived. What ultimately seems to have suggested his destructive criticism of grants in aid of wages as a method for the relief of want was a searching examination of Godwin's *Political Justice*. It seemed to Malthus that the tendency of population to increase beyond the means of subsistence raised an impassable barrier to every scheme and every dream of social regeneration. Stated generally, his philosophy is that all the miseries afflicting society are so many expressions of the

[1] Toynbee, *The Industrial Revolution*, p. 103.
[2] H. de B. Gibbins, *Industry in England*, p. 412.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Moral Philosophy*, p. vii.

ultimate fatality which prevents the limited additions to human food from keeping pace with the indefinite multiplication of human mouths. In point of fact, population has not increased at anything like the rate that would have been attained under the most favourable conditions; but this, according to Malthus, is chiefly because disease, vice, war, and famine have combined to check its normal growth; the removal of every preventable evil would merely leave mankind face to face with famine as the one insuperable enemy, and famine would bring back every other evil in its train.

Malthus afterwards came to admit that the practice of prudential self-restraint might be so developed as to keep the number of human beings within the limits of a comfortable existence; and as Godwin assumed that in a rational state of society such restraint would be habitually practised, the difference between them almost disappeared. At any rate, the *Essay on Population* merely applied to a particular case what *Political Justice* made the principle of all progress—the substitution of conscious, rational prevision for blind and violent constraint.

Since Malthus wrote, his law has been extended to the whole organic world, and has been exhibited as the sole cause, or at least a prime cause, of organic evolution. But Malthus had already grasped the possibility of such an application within the limits of the human species. Without dreaming of any change in its fundamental constitution, he represents the pressure of population on the means of subsistence as a divinely appointed

instrument for the perpetual exercise and enhancement of man's industry and ingenuity. He failed to see that a result which would equally have come about in the absence of supernatural guidance leaves the case for theism no stronger than before. And, of course, he still more thoroughly failed to see that his principle would become the basis of a vast theory destined, in the opinion of some, to supersede theism altogether. Meanwhile the Essay told as a trenchant criticism on Pitt's Poor Law, and led to an immediate reconstruction of scientific economics.

The French Revolution had been prepared by a philosophy in which destructive criticism on theology played a great part; it had been conducted by professed unbelievers, who began by confiscating Church property and ended with a proscription of the priests who took their orders from Rome. In England Burke had denounced it as anti-religious and as quite alien from the essentially religious genius of the English people. He referred to the English Deists as long extinct, and to their writings as forgotten. It would have been more correct to say that Deism had not set up any organised effort to strip the Anglican Church of her temporalities; but this was rather the result of a tacit compromise with Rationalism than a sign of its defeat. Since Hume, freethought had been spreading among the higher intellects, and with some had doubled the area of its original negations. Gibbon, the greatest of modern historians, counted among the assailants of Christianity; Bentham and Erasmus Darwin were known in private to be atheists; Romilly and Mackintosh seem to have

been Deists; Fox had no religious beliefs, nor, as would appear, had Pitt either.[1] On the other hand, the Church of England, while remaining nominally orthodox, had in practice become a teacher of what amounted to little more than a purely ethical religion, insisting on no dogmas beyond a personal God and a future life as sanctions of morality. Meanwhile a number of Nonconformists, grouping themselves under the name of Unitarians, compromised more openly with Deism by renouncing the dogmas of Original Sin, the Incarnation, and the Atonement.

Against this movement for transforming religion into simple morality a double protest was raised—by Methodism outside the Church and by Evangelicalism within it. Evangelicalism had gained access to the highest political circles in the person of Wilberforce, but otherwise had little hold on the intellect of England.

It has been shown with what energy the revolutionary atmosphere acted on all the latent tendencies of English life and thought, quickening the sense of possibility on the one hand and the sense of actuality on the other. It could not, therefore, fail to rekindle the old conflict between the appeal to a supernatural revelation and the exclusive reliance on nature which had divided opinion half a century before.

The first to break silence on the Rationalist side was Thomas Paine. Part I. of his *Age of Reason* appeared in 1794; Part II., a work of much greater importance, in 1795. Paine's natural bent was

[1] J. M. Robertson, *A Short History of Freethought,* vol. ii., p. 177 (2nd ed.).

towards science; circumstances made him a democratic politician. He founded the alliance of Rationalism with science and democracy. Attracted at an early age by astronomy, he could not reconcile the very insignificant place in the universe occupied by our earth with the overwhelming importance ascribed to its human population by the scheme of salvation. But in rejecting that scheme as represented by the current Christianity he did not rely exclusively on the *a priori* arguments that astronomy suggests. Admitting the possibility of a divine revelation, he denies that any has been made to man beyond the structure of the universe itself. Part II. of the *Age of Reason* goes through the Bible with the object of showing that much of what it contains is inconsistent with the theory of its divine authorship. If Paine added nothing to what the English and French deists had said before him, he brought together the substance of their attacks on the Old and New Testament stories, and restated it in a clear, popular style. Much of what he said was afterwards practically conceded by Coleridge, and has since been more or less openly admitted by many who claim to be Christian believers.

Although originally intended for the French rather than for the English public, it was in England that the *Age of Reason* proved most successful; and an attempt was at once made to stop its circulation among the poorer classes, the shilling edition being suppressed while the half-crown edition remained unmolested. For selling one copy a bookseller named Williams was prosecuted and sentenced to a year's imprisonment

(1797). But this seems to have been an isolated case ; nor did persecution for propagating unbelief at that time rage with anything like the virulence displayed a quarter of a century later.

Paley's *Evidences of Christianity,* long the official text-book of orthodox apologetics, appeared in the same year as Paine's attack, but without reference to it. The main positions defended are : That miracles are not antecedently incredible to anyone who believes that the world was created by a personal Being ; that Christianity could not have been introduced into the world without a display of divine authority involving some departure from the usual course of nature ; that such a departure was justified by the end in view ; that miracles performed for that purpose are recorded and abundantly attested in early Christian literature ; that the authenticity of the books containing their evidence is certain ; and that the credibility of the witnesses is established by their willingness to undergo cruel torment rather than renounce their belief, as also by their acceptance of a severe morality on the strength of the Gospel promises.

In the present state of criticism it is clear to all, and it must have been clear to many in his own day, that Paley's case rests on a series of assumptions inconsistent with religious psychology and with the results of New Testament criticism. But his steady reliance on pure reason as distinguished from the methods of authority and mysticism, his clear-headedness and dialectical ability, furnish one more instance of the increased intellectual seriousness which the French Revolution had communicated to the English genius. And the need for

such a defence shows how pressing the attack had become.

Paley's *Evidences* sought to show that the Christian religion was a supernatural revelation. A few years later Wilberforce, in his *Practical View of Christianity,* achieved something much greater: he showed what that religion actually was. It is not, according to him, what the eighteenth century vainly imagined, an ethical code armed with new sanctions; but, first of all, an explanation of the fact, universally recognised as such by everyone who has eyes to see, that man is by nature and fatal heredity an utterly corrupt creature, alienated from his Creator, and justly subject to awful penalties for that original apostasy. The Christian revelation tells us that from that lost condition there is one way of escape, and one alone. It has been furnished by the self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who vicariously took upon himself the punishment due to our sins, and whose satisfaction we may henceforth plead, if we accept it, in discharge of our liabilities before God. Without that plea the austerest virtue cannot save us; but the austerest virtue is felt as a life-long obligation by him who has accepted the transfer of his sin and its consequences to the Redeemer. God must reign without a rival in the thoughts and affections of the true believer; and on one day of the week he must think of nothing but God.

This conception of human life as the prelude to man's eternal existence under the form of a disembodied spirit, and interesting only by reference to another disembodied spirit eternally distinct from the world, was the very essence of the religious

movement begun two generations before by William Law and John Wesley, and remodelled a generation later by Keble and Newman. It is the form given by minds of a certain constitution in a certain stage of culture to the claim that disinterested, ideal ends shall be made paramount over the selfish, frivolous, and fleeting satisfactions of a merely animal existence. To realise those obligations under concrete personal forms gives them at first an extraordinary grip on the affections and the will, but eventually compromises and corrupts their idealism by union with a perishable body of class-interests and unwarrantable beliefs, frequently degenerating into abject superstition. Wilberforce and his co-religionists led the agitation for the abolition of the slave trade and slavery, which, however, would neither have begun nor have succeeded without the co-operation of men who stood at the opposite pole of thought. But they were out of sympathy with the scientific and literary glories of the age; their religious scruples long hindered the advent of popular education, and their credulous conservatism made them the natural enemies of all reforms directed towards benefiting the people with the aid of the people itself.

Chapter III.

THE EPIC OF NATIONS

The war between England and Napoleon from 1803 to 1814–15 is generally regarded by historians as a simple continuation of the war between England and the French Republic from 1793 to 1802. And this much is true, that the personal hostility of Napoleon to England, as the chief obstacle to his design of creating a world-empire, had already begun to show itself when, as General Bonaparte, he led a French expedition to Egypt with the object of making it a stepping-stone to the conquest of India. But, apart from what the necessities of self-defence demanded of her, the attitude and intention of England in the second war differed widely from what they had been in the first. She had then appeared as the champion of order against license; she now appeared as the champion of liberty against oppression; while, conversely, the sword of France was transferred from the cause of emancipation to the cause of spoliation and enslavement. On France's side, indeed, the change had been long in progress, and the Republic must share the responsibility for it with the Empire. Coleridge's great *Ode to France* lives as an immortal record both of her shameless aggression on Switzerland and of its effect in alienating the sympathies of some that even the Terror had left unshaken supporters of her

democracy. But England as a State had never pretended to fight for Switzerland any more than for Venice; and the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy continued to be the avowed object of her rulers until the haughty rebuff of the First Consul brought them to their senses. The second war, on the other hand, though nominally engaged on the question of our retention of Malta, was really provoked by new French aggressions on Holland and Switzerland. From the beginning England's own independence had been at stake; in five years the war became a struggle for the deliverance of the Iberian Peninsula, in which the Portuguese and Spanish peoples fought on our side; the Tyrolese were next enlisted in the same cause; then came the heroic resistance of the Russian people; and, finally, the whole German nation rose in arms against the tyranny of Napoleon.

English public opinion could not fail to be affected by so vast a transformation of the questions at issue. During a war avowedly waged for the restoration of liberty, the friends of liberty could no longer be denounced as Jacobins; and, although there was still wide disagreement about our Continental relations, the dividing line ran more on policy than on principle. It became the fashion in Whig circles to throw doubt on the regeneration of the Spanish people—as subsequently appeared, not without good reason—and to predict the eventual failure of our arms in the Peninsula—as, had it not been for Napoleon's incalculable Moscow campaign, they would, in fact, have failed. But no party wished the French to win, or regarded their victories as other than defeats for freedom. Even

before the Spanish rising William Cobbett, the most popular of Radical journalists, denounced Napoleon as a military despot, and ardently advocated the continuance of the war until his empire should have been shorn of those maritime conquests which made it a perpetual menace to the independence of England. And he also had the highest hopes of our ultimate success, if English arms were brought into alliance with the popular revolt against French oppression.

The change of opinion brought about by this altered aspect of foreign politics could not fail to react on the balance of parties at home. The coalition of the majority of the Whigs with Pitt, the acceptance of a royal pension by Burke, and the secession of Fox from Parliament had marked the lowest depth to which Liberalism ever sank in modern England; while the final destruction of Irish autonomy a little later had completed the triumph of reaction. A few years afterwards Pitt himself was making overtures to Fox which, had they been successful, would have resulted in giving his great rival an equal share of power. Owing to the King's dislike of Fox the negotiations fell through; but on Pitt's death even George III.'s obstinacy had to give way, and the Whigs returned to power for the first time since 1783, their brief predominance being signalised by the abolition of the slave trade, which had been impossible so long as Pitt lived. On two subsequent occasions they might have secured a considerable share of office under the Prince Regent had not the demands of their leaders been pitched too high.

It has been already mentioned that Pitt carried

the Union with Ireland partly by an informal promise to the Irish people that the law excluding Roman Catholics from Parliament should be repealed. We cannot doubt his sincerity, but he had reckoned without the King. The Archbishops of Canterbury and Armagh got hold of the royal ear and persuaded George III. that for him to agree to such a measure would involve the violation of his coronation oath and the forfeiture of his Crown. Finding that his master's scruples could not be overcome, the great Minister honourably resigned, and Addington, an incompetent favourite, was installed in his place. Never since the accession of the Hanoverian dynasty had the power of the Crown been so signally or so disastrously exercised. And, as a further aggravation of its absurdity, at this very crisis the King was overtaken by one of those fits of insanity the very liability to which would have permanently excluded him from any inferior office of authority. It operated in this instance to strengthen his position. By threatening to go mad if Catholic Emancipation were ever again mentioned to him George III. succeeded in exacting a pledge from Pitt and all Pitt's successors that silence should be kept on so irritating a subject.

As parties grew more evenly balanced the power of the Crown became more and more a decisive factor in the situation, those who yielded to the royal will naturally having the advantage of those who defied it. But the Tories who were King's men ultimately had to pay dear for their degrading subservience, as indeed also had the Crown itself by the loss of all its authority. On the other hand, the new exercise of prerogative proved the salvation

of the Whigs. By refusing to take the King's pledge they acquired an unwonted dignity, and even a certain moral splendour. The old charge of greed for office could no longer be urged against men who sacrificed office to a scrupulous regard for honour, peace, justice, and toleration. The charge of aristocratic exclusiveness fell pointless against the champions of a despised and down-trodden race. The charge of adhering to anti-quated shibboleths seemed ridiculous as against the generous orators whose programme was so enlarged as to include respect for a religion their ancestors had long proscribed. The charge of truckling to popular clamour grew ever more irrelevant as the mob came to side with the King, whose prejudices they shared.

Nor was this all. If the Whigs won by taking up Emancipation, their enemies lost to an even greater degree by not accepting it. The Crown became a symbol of unpatriotic obstinacy and folly. Nearly all the Whig leaders who had allied themselves with Pitt in 1794—Grenville, Fitz-william, Spencer, and Windham—accepted the Catholic claims and returned to their old allegiance. Some of the ablest Tories—Canning, Castlereagh, the Marquess Wellesley—while remaining within the party, sided on that question with their political opponents, and thus formed a continual source of embarrassment to their associates, terminating in open disruption when the Protestant leaders them-selves accepted Emancipation—a catastrophe by which the power of the Crown was finally destroyed. Meanwhile, the Catholic gentlemen of Ireland were driven into the arms of the Irish people, thus

helping to create a new difficulty for the English aristocracy and a new link between the cause of suffering nationalities and the cause of European liberty.

Although resumed under far different auspices, the war with France long did as little to overthrow the new despotism as had been done in the previous decade to overthrow the new democracy. Even where they were not directly pitted against individual genius, our incapable oligarchy continued to pile up disaster and debt. An expedition to Buenos Ayres was placed by Court influence under the command of General Whitelocke, whom a court-martial subsequently declared "unfit to serve his Majesty in any military capacity whatever."[1] It terminated in the defeat and capitulation of a strong British force. A far more important expedition to the Low Countries was ruined by being placed under the command of a royal favourite, Lord Chatham, whose incompetence did not escape even his own brother, Pitt. Expeditions against Constantinople and Alexandria came to an equally ignominious end. Finally, a war with the United States, for which the lawless arrogance of our rulers is chiefly responsible, was signalised by the defeat of General Packenham at New Orleans, with the loss of 3,000 Peninsular veterans.

It must not be supposed that our naval was much better than our military administration. After Nelson by his individual genius had annihilated France's sea power, French privateers continued to infest the English coast and to capture

[1] *Political History of England* (1800–1837), p. 57.

English vessels in full sight of English men-of-war.[1] During the American War the conflict at sea was generally carried on by duels between frigates, in which the Americans were most frequently victorious. This was due to no deficiency in seamanship or gallantry on our side, but to the fact that our champions were invariably over-matched, being ignorantly allowed to engage what, although called frigates, were almost equal to ships of the line. And that such ignorance prevailed was due to the intelligence department—if it deserves that name—of the English Admiralty. For, shortly before hostilities began, one of these so-called frigates had anchored at Spithead, and offered an opportunity for estimating her fighting strength as compared with our own frigates, which opportunity was utterly neglected.[2]

When the hour of victory arrived the same military mismanagement contrived to throw its fruits away. Fortune placed at the disposal of the oligarchy a young general, sprung from their own ranks, gifted, for a wonder, with military genius, and, by a greater wonder still, with the genius for making the most of it by assiduous cultivation. Arthur Wellesley, although of noble birth, was saved from the usual temptations of his order by a fortunate poverty which caused him to be removed at an early age from Eton to a French academy, and which, when his school days were over, obliged him to work for his living. Aristocratic connections gave him the one thing he had to thank them for—early and rapid promotion. India practised him in

[1] *The Croker Papers,* vol. i., p. 33. [2] *Ibid,* p. 45.

the exercise of command. The best humanitarian traditions of the eighteenth century acting on a naturally kind heart imbued him with a habitual, and, as it happened, most politic consideration for the sufferings and susceptibilities of alien and helpless races.

In 1808 an opportunity offered itself to the English Government for employing this young hero in Europe. Castlereagh, at that time War Minister, gave Sir Arthur Wellesley the command of a small expedition sent to deliver Portugal from a French invasion. A few weeks after disembarking his troops at Lisbon, he defeated Marshal Junot in the decisive battle of Vimiero, only to find the fruits of victory torn from his grasp by an incompetent favourite of the Horse Guards. Castlereagh had persuaded his colleagues to raise the strength of the expedition from ten to thirty thousand men, but his efforts to place the enlarged force under Wellesley's command were baffled by the King.[1] No sooner had the victor of Assaye set sail than "two senior officers of no special ability;"[2] Sir Harry Burrard and Sir Hew Dalrymple, were placed over his head. Burrard arrived on the field of Vimiero at the moment when Sir Arthur was about to launch his reserves on the retreating French columns, just in time to assume the command and to forbid the pursuit, which would probably have ended in the unconditional surrender of Junot's whole army. As it was, on the very next morning Dalrymple, who in his turn had superseded Burrard, received proposals for a

[1] Lord Holland, *Further Memoirs of the Whig Party*, p. 15.
[2] *The Cambridge Modern History*, vol. ix., p. 440.

capitulation from Junot. But by this time the French had occupied a position of such strength that, so far from surrendering, they were able to insist on being conveyed to their country by English ships, taking with them all the plunder they had amassed, and with a guarantee of immunity to the Portuguese traitors who had abetted their designs.

The Convention of Cintra, as it was called, aroused a storm of indignation in England, and the generals were put on their trial. On examination by a court of inquiry they were honourably acquitted; but Burrard and Dalrymple were not again employed, whereas Wellesley received the sole command of another expedition to Portugal in the following year. It is said that the Duke of York, undeterred by his disastrous experience in Flanders, had intended to claim that position for himself, and that his purpose was only defeated by certain scandalous disclosures so opportunely sprung on the public as to suggest a suspicion that the somewhat ignoble personage who brought them before Parliament, one Colonel Wardle, was really acting on behalf of the War Office, whose responsible heads had no other means of keeping the Duke at home.[1] At any rate, it appeared that the mistress of the Commander-in-Chief, an actress named Mrs. Clarke, gave out that her royal lover allowed himself to be guided by her recommendations in the choice of officers for promotion, and that, on the strength of this alleged favour, she had opened an office for the private sale of commissions. That such transactions did take place there could

[1] This is hinted by Lord Holland, *Further Memoirs of the Whig Party*, p. 16.

be no doubt; the only question was whether the Duke had a guilty knowledge of them or not. The most plausible theory seems to be that he was innocent, but that, being a very loquacious person, he let Mrs. Clarke into the secret of his intention to bestow free commissions on certain deserving candidates, and that she profited by the information to levy toll on them under the pretence that the promotion which would anyhow have been theirs had been obtained by her interest.[1] On any view the affair was a scandalous one, and the Duke, though acquitted of connivance with his mistress's practices, had the decency to resign. His brother, the Prince Regent, subsequently restored him to the Command-in-Chief, an office which he otherwise filled very creditably; but by that time the supposed object of the Parliamentary attack had been gained, and, whatever else Sir Arthur Wellesley had reason to complain of, Court influence could no longer be turned against him. Nobody seems to have noticed in this affair that the objectionable thing was for commissions in the army to be sold by anyone to anyone on any terms.

None gave such eloquent expression to public feeling at this time as the poet Wordsworth, in a pamphlet on the Convention of Cintra. In a private letter the author of *The Prelude,* then not yet a "lost leader," prescribes two things as "absolutely necessary to the country—a thorough reform in Parliament and a new course of education."[2]

The new education of public opinion had already

[1] Kinglake, *Invasion of the Crimea,* vol. vii., pp. 418–19 (Cabinet ed.).

[2] Knight, *Life of Wordsworth,* vol. ii., p. 130.

begun years before Wordsworth wrote those lines —with little help or countenance, it must be owned, from the poet himself—under the form of a strenuous criticism on contemporary literature and life. The first collective impulse came from Edinburgh, with its brilliant University, its intellectual society, and its highly cultivated band of advocates. Among the forces making for culture and freedom in the northern capital, Dugald Stewart, Professor of Moral Philosophy since 1785, must be given the foremost place. As a thinker Stewart merely expounded Reid's shallow and reactionary metaphysics. But, as an educator and orator of the Chair, he exercised an unrivalled power of exciting noble enthusiasm among his young hearers. In society he was supported by a wife of surpassing charm and high intellectual interests, the "Ivy" of Lord Dudley's recently published letters. With the closing of the Continent it had become usual for English families of distinction to visit or even to reside at Edinburgh for pleasure or education; and, among others, the sons of great Whig magnates were sometimes sent to sit at the feet of a teacher who, even under Melville's reign of terror, had made no secret of his sympathy with the Revolution. Among his pupils were two future Prime Ministers, Russell and Palmerston, to whom must be added Lord Henry Petty (afterwards Lord Lansdowne), Ward (afterwards Earl Dudley), and Lord Webb Seymour. Some years later we find another future Whig Premier, William Lamb (afterwards Lord Melbourne), studying under Professor Millar at Glasgow.

From this fertilising contact between the English and Scottish intellects arose the *Edinburgh Review,* long the chief organ of Liberal opinion in Great Britain. The first idea of it was due to an Englishman, the great humorist Sydney Smith, who also edited the opening number, published in October, 1802; but much the greater mass of contributions came from Scotch lawyers, among whom Jeffrey, Horner, and Brougham stood foremost for ability and power. In after years also the only articles of permanent literary value, with the possible exception of Sir James Stephen's, were written by Carlyle and Sir William Hamilton, who were Scotchmen, or by Macaulay and Mill, whose fathers were Scotch.

Carlyle has described Jeffrey as the greatest of destructive critics. But this is a complete misrepresentation. Although holding rationalistic opinions, Jeffrey never attacked the reigning theology in print. Nor were his politics democratic, although he wished to reinforce existing institutions with a large popular element, advising the Whig aristocracy to seek support among the people. Unlike some other Whigs, he hated Napoleon; but, being of a desponding temperament, he opposed the Spanish policy of the Government—which, after all, only succeeded by a happy chance— a step which led to the severance of Walter Scott from the *Edinburgh Review,* and the transference of his support to the *Quarterly Review,* founded in 1809 as the chief organ of the reactionary principle in politics and literature.

On the whole, we may say that the principles of the *Edinburgh,* as guided by Jeffrey, coincided

with the central line of English political progress for the next two generations after its birth; but to maintain the movement in that line forces of a more radical direction had to lend their aid.

At that time the chief Parliamentary representative of the Reform party in England was Sir Francis Burdett, and its chief literary representative was William Cobbett. Each in his way did good work, but it was critical rather than constructive. The real founder of English philosophical Radicalism was a Scotchman, James Mill. This remarkable thinker, according to George Grote the greatest intellect that he had ever encountered, owed his enthusiasm for philosophy to Dugald Stewart, and perhaps his enthusiasm for liberty also. At any rate, he came up to London in 1802 a confirmed Liberal, though no Jacobin. His intimacy with Bentham begins not later than 1808. During the Revolution Bentham had been a high Tory. In 1809 we find him writing a Catechism for Reformers, in which universal suffrage is advocated. The dates suggest that he had been converted by Mill.[1] At any rate, Mill is henceforward the centre of what has come to be known as the Benthamite school. Dumont had first revealed Bentham to England and to all Europe by his French version of the *Theory of Legislation,* published in 1802. James Mill allied Utilitarianism with the political economy of Malthus and Ricardo, with the associationist psychology of Hartley, with a renewed study of Greek ideas, and with a comprehensive educational system, embracing all these as

[1] Elie Halévy, *Le Radicalisme Philosophique,* vol. ii., p. 196.

its elements, of which his illustrious son offers, so far, the only complete example. It is probable, as I have said, that he also allied Utilitarianism with democracy. Under his guidance the school adopted that extreme view, long supported by English Radicalism, for which the moderate Whig Reform Bill was finally substituted as a working compromise, with James Mill's complete approval. But this belongs to a period at which we have not yet arrived.

What best proves the growing liberality of the Napoleonic period is the spread of education among all classes and the lively interest shown in competing schemes for the education of the people. J. W. Ward, Dugald Stewart's pupil, who took his B.A. at Oxford in 1802, on revisiting the University in 1812 finds to his astonishment that during those ten years it has been transformed into a place of education. Examinations have ceased to be a matter of form; rioting and drunkenness are quite exceptional; idleness is discreditable, and reading the correct thing.[1] Writing between three and four years later, Coleridge contrasts the steady and serious tone of both Oxford and Cambridge with what it had been thirty years before, mentioning particularly "the zest in the pursuit of knowledge and academic distinction in a large and increasing number,"[2] associating it as part of a more general movement with "predominant anxiety concerning the education and principles of their

[1] Ward, *Letters to Ivy*, p. 182.

[2] Coleridge, *Church and State*, pp. 354–55 (ed. of 1839).

children in all the respectable classes of the community." Godwin, with ideals very unlike Coleridge's, observes, writing to Shelley in 1812, that between then and twenty years before the alteration in the men of these islands and of Europe was immense, greater progress having been made during that interval "than in any hundred years preceding."[1] And Jeffrey, no optimist, writing in 1809, tells the readers of the *Edinburgh* that "the people are, upon the whole, both more moral and more intelligent than they ever were in any former period."[2] In a word, from the time that we ceased to assail the French Revolution—and even a little before—its true principles began to spread and thrive among us.

Among the higher and middle classes the new demand for education was met to a considerable extent by existing endowments and by voluntary efforts. The demand for primary education had to struggle not only against the want of endowments, but also against the undisguised hostility of some among the well-to-do. "If there was any principle reverenced as indisputable by almost the whole adherents of the party in power," even little more than a century ago, "it was that the ignorance of the people was necessary for their obedience to the law."[3] Accordingly, even an unsuccessful attempt to do away with that ignorance by legislation must be noted as a sign of the times. Under Grenville's Ministry (1807) Whitbread, a prominent Whig, brought in a Bill providing free education for the

[1] Hogg, *Life of Shelley*, vol. ii., p. 107.
[2] Jeffrey, *Contributions to the Edinburgh Review*, vol. iv., p. 129.
[3] Cockburn, *Life of Lord Jeffrey*, vol. i., pp. 67-68.

poor in every parish throughout England. After passing the Commons against Windham's passionate opposition, probably in the assurance that it would be rejected by the Lords,[1] it was duly rejected, three Bishops voting for the Bill and fifteen against it. Archbishop Manners Sutton objected to Whitbread's plan that it would take education from the control of the Establishment—in his opinion a most dangerous innovation.[2]

Meanwhile private enterprise was supplying the place of State action. Several years earlier Andrew Bell, an East Indian army chaplain, had struck out a system of mutual instruction in schools, known afterwards from the place of its origin as the Madras method. The same idea occurred independently to Joseph Lancaster, a Quaker schoolmaster in London, who put it in practice on a large scale, carrying on an active propaganda for the system in all parts of the kingdom, and securing the support of sundry royal and noble patrons. With their aid he founded in 1809 the Royal Lancastrian Institution, a name afterwards changed to the British and Foreign School Society. Lancaster was a very religious man, but his plan was to teach religion simply by reading the Bible. Church people objected to this as tending to undermine the Establishment. Their attacks on Lancaster stirred up Bell to start a rival agitation for placing elementary teaching under the control of the Church. His efforts led to the foundation of the National Society in 1811. Between the two systems a bitter feud

[1] Romilly, *Memoirs,* vol. ii., p. 222.
[2] Clayton, *The Bishops and Legislation,* p. 59.

sprang up, and has continued down to the present day. The leading Whigs and the *Edinburgh Review* sided with Lancaster, the Tories and the *Quarterly* with Bell. Herbert Marsh, afterwards Bishop of Peterborough, for those times a wonderfully liberal Biblical critic, made himself remarkable for the energy he threw into the sectarian cause; and Coleridge, the most advanced theologian of the day, lost no opportunity for attacking Lancaster with ludicrous animosity.

As an instrument for imparting knowledge the Madras method eventually broke down; but the Bell and Lancaster schools gave an impulse to popular education that has never since died out; while the feud between the two systems has brought religious differences into a stimulating connection with party politics, and raised both into the sphere of high national interests.

In physical science the period of the second French war fulfilled to some extent the promises of the revolutionary epoch, but was less productive of original thought. England suffered intellectually by her long isolation from the Continent. None were found to develop Erasmus Darwin's evolutionary ideas. Young's undulatory theory of light was allowed to be crushed by Brougham's ignorant and insolent criticism of it in the *Edinburgh Review* (1803). The most important pioneer work was done by two Scotchmen, Dr. Thomas Brown and Sir Charles Bell. Brown, in his treatise *On Cause and Effect,* took up Hume's theory of causation and introduced the idea of invariable sequence into the philosophy of science. Bell in 1811, after

four years of investigation, announced the distinction between the sensory and motor nerves, and explained the nature of their connection with the spinal cord. It seems characteristic of the time that both achievements were rather analytic than synthetic and constructive, probing phenomena to the bottom, not exhibiting them in their systematic connection. Thus they fall into line with Davy's contemporary decomposition of the alkalis rather than with the great theories of Dalton, Young, and Erasmus Darwin.

As compared with the revolutionary period, literature also shows a distinct decline both in poetry and fiction. The French and German inspirations had spent much of their force. Romanticism still prevails, but declines on a more realistic plane of representation. As a part of this realism we find the popular poets of the age reflecting the new political situation created by the resistance to Napoleon's aggressive career. On the Tory side we have Scott's series of versified narratives, romantic indeed, but strictly subordinating the emotions of wonder, terror, and sexual passion, so freely employed by his predecessors, to the motives of picturesque historical association, of local colour, and of loyalty, whether under the form of national patriotism or of the intenser devotion given by a clansman to his chief. On the Whig side we have Byron's first two Cantos of *Childe Harold,* where a certain reluctant sympathy with the victims of French rapacity and with the English armies sent to deliver them struggles against a good Foxite's dominant detestation of all

war as such ; while the romantic use of horror and voluptuousness as imaginative excitements is not forgotten, and hollow eighteenth-century abstractions still crowd the scene. But in the portions giving the new poet's impressions of modern Greece reminiscence becomes prophecy ; the traditions of republican liberty and heroism derived from Harrow and Cambridge spring to life before the entrancing spectacles of Parnassus and Marathon, consecrating this young English nobleman to be the future augur and leader in the coming war of opinion where the spirit of nationality and the spirit of individual liberty, retrieving France's errors, were to combine their forces against the spirit of feudal and absolutist reaction.

Childe Harold was followed by a series of dazzling metrical romances in which the same sympathy with Greece and the same hatred for her Turkish oppressors ally themselves to a general spirit of revolt against cramping conventions. Byron's extravagant admiration for the great literary conventionalist, Pope, seems at first sight inconsistent with such an attitude. But it was merely another aspect of his pervading liberalism. By Pope Byron meant the classic tradition of English poetry, the side on which it represented republican liberty as against the reactionary romanticism of Coleridge, Southey, and Scott.

Byron's friend Moore contributed to the cause of nationalities by the publication of his *Irish Melodies* in 1807. As poetry they have little value, but the musical accompaniments to which their author sang them in Whig drawing-rooms gave the words and sentiments a certain social importance, and

combined with his versatile productivity, particularly as a biographer, to make him a power in the party.

Wordsworth continued a political Radical till the end of the war, supporting the various patriotic movements against Napoleon, but still an ardent admirer of Fox; still, as we have seen, a Parliamentary Reformer; still no Christian, but a Platonist in the *Ode on Immortality*; still a pantheist in the *Excursion* (1814); and, what is perhaps even more significant, in the same poem an advocate of universal education.

Maria Edgeworth, in the silence of Jane Austen, the greatest novelist of the period, obeys the same tendency by striking into the didactic vein which she never afterwards forsook. Her Benthamite morality, too, offers a silent but not unregarded protest against Evangelical mysticism.

It has often been observed that without the industrial revolution England could never have fought the war with Napoleon, still less come out victorious from the conflict with that almost superhuman genius. But, in fact, had it not been for the industrial revolution there would have been no war, or at least none on so vast a scale. The English colonisation of America, the English conquest of India, had been largely suggested by the hope of gain. Both had been disputed by France with the object of diverting that gain to herself. In both regions French ambition and enterprise succumbed before the genius of the elder Pitt. Twenty years later it was imagined that the loss of her North American colonies would involve the commercial ruin of the mother country;

and the object of her old rival in helping the insurgents was to hasten on that consummation, which the English Government on its side fought desperately to avert. Both were deceived. The defeated power gained enormously in wealth, while the victorious Bourbon monarchy paid by its own extinction for an act of treason against constituted authority, just as the New Monarchy in England perished by the reaction of that very Reformation whose success it had secured in order to destroy the last check on its despotism a century before.

French policy, however, survived the Bourbons, and even provided itself with a far more powerful instrument. When the first ferment of the Revolution had subsided the adventurer whom it raised to supreme eminence in the State at once took up the tradition of his predecessors and rushed to strike for India once more, this time taking the path of Alexander through Egypt and Syria. In the pursuit of that chimera he lost a fleet and an army, and nearly wrecked his own career; but, returning to France a fugitive, won her throne by a lucky throw, and sat down once more with full pockets to play the game of universal empire at a board where European kingdoms were counters, India and Asia remaining the stakes through it all. To defeat England's German and Russian allies in the field was the least of his difficulties, each military success counting but as a means towards the higher end of undermining her commercial position, each new invasion being determined by the fatal necessity for closing every Continental market to her trade. His tragic Peninsular and Russian expeditions were undertaken that the excluding cordon might

be extended without a break from Riga to Lisbon, and round again from Lisbon to Odessa.

In the battle between the French Revolution and oligarchy revolution had won. But in the battle between the industrial revolution and militarism industry won. It seemed as if England's material resources were multiplied by the very measures taken to destroy them. Napoleon's Continental system, originally adopted as a reply to the paper blockade of the coast from Brest to the Elbe, was in its turn met by an Order in Council "forbidding neutrals to trade between the ports of France and her allies, or between the ports of nations which should observe the Berlin decree, on pain of the confiscation of the ship and cargo."[1] Its effect was to throw the whole carrying trade into British hands. At the same time our immunity from invasion, combined with the relative insecurity of Continental industry, gave us a manufacturing monopoly. As a consequence of this privileged position the trade of the United Kingdom, measured by the sum of its exports and imports, was in 1815 exactly double what the trade of Great Britain had been in 1795.[2] "The value of taxable income from lands, houses, etc., was estimated at forty-five million pounds in 1798 and at sixty millions in 1815."[3] "The Census of 1801 showed an increase of eleven per cent., the Census of 1811 an increase of fourteen per cent., the Census of 1821 an increase of twenty-one per cent."[4] The tonnage of shipping belonging to Great Britain

[1] *The Political History of England* (1800–1837), p. 55.
[2] *Social England*, vol. v., p. 606.
[3] *Ibid*, p. 611.
[4] *Ibid*, p. 608.

and Ireland increased over sixty-two per cent. between 1793 and 1813.

But as the political revolution in France had greatly increased the power of the central Government, so the industrial revolution in England made the rich richer and the poor poorer. It was the capitalist manufacturers who gained by the increasing volume of trade, while the landholders gained both by agricultural improvements and by the rise in the price of corn. Wheat rose from 49s. 3d. per quarter in 1793 to 69s. in 1799, to 113s. 10d. in 1800, and 106s. in 1810.[1] This was partly due to legislation. "In 1791 a duty of 24s. 3d. was imposed as long as English wheat was less than 50s. a quarter; if English wheat was over 50s., the duty was 2s. 6d. In 1804 foreign corn was practically prohibited from importation if English wheat was less than 53s. a quarter; in 1815 the prohibition was extended till the price of English wheat was 80s. a quarter."[2]

Meanwhile the cost of paying for the war was thrown as much as possible on the poor, every necessity and convenience of daily life being taxed, and the incomes of capitalists and landowners not paying their fair share.[3] By the system of supplementing agricultural wages from the poor-rate the farmers were even enabled to throw part of the maintenance of labour on householders who often could ill afford it.

Strikes were penal. "The Act of 1800 was applied to all occupations, unions, or associations

[1] H. de B. Gibbins, p. 375.
[2] *Ibid*, pp. 434–35.
[3] *Ibid*, p. 375.

of workmen for the purpose of obtaining an advance in wages or lessening the hours of work."[1]

This Act seems to have been passed without any debate. The penalty for violating its provisions was three months' imprisonment without, or two months with, hard labour.[2]

The wages to increase which the recipients could not combine are described as "excessively low."[3] "In 1800 the average wages of artisans were 18s. a week in London. They gradually rose by about seventy-five per cent. during the years of dearth.....When greater plenty prevailed they fell. In the country they were about a third less than in London."[4] Spinners were better paid, getting 24s. to 26s. a week from 1808 to 1815. Weavers, on the other hand, were miserably off, their wages falling from 13s. 10d. a week in 1802, when wheat cost only 67s. 9d. a quarter, to 4s. 3½d. in 1817, when it stood at 94s.[5] The introduction of machinery, leading as it did to the employment of women and children in the factories, is responsible for this decline. It also had the effect, in some instances, of throwing great numbers out of work altogether. Thus in 1811–12 a particular frame for stocking-weaving came into use at Nottingham which enabled one man to do the work of many, throwing the superfluous hands out of employment. Their remedy was to break into houses and destroy the frames—a

[1] H. de B. Gibbins, p. 417.
[2] Stephen, *History of the Criminal Law in England,* vol. iii., pp. 207–8.
[3] H. de B. Gibbins, p. 424.
[4] Thorold Rogers, *Six Centuries of Work and Wages,* p. 494.
[5] H. de B. Gibbins, pp. 424–25.

reprehensible act of violence, but more excusable than the conduct of the landowning monopolists who at this time were excluding foreign corn in order to keep up their own rents. The legislature, however, thought differently, and passed a Bill punishing the frame-breakers with death. On this occasion Byron, who opposed the second reading, told the Lords that he had traversed the seat of war in the Peninsula, and had been in some of the most oppressed provinces of Turkey; but never under the most despotic of infidel governments had he beheld such squalid wretchedness as he had seen since his return in the very heart of a Christian country.[1]

What Byron saw was only a specimen of the distress that prevailed through all the manufacturing districts of Great Britain, usually accompanied by the destruction of machinery and even of mills. Other causes besides the substitution of mechanical power for human labour had concurred to bring it about. Since 1797 cash payments had been suspended, and inflated issues of paper, combined with the bad harvest of 1809, had resulted in a terrible commercial crisis by which great numbers of operatives were thrown out of employment. Another crisis followed in 1814, caused this time by a good harvest, which, thanks to the protectionist system, ruined the farmers and obliged more than a third of the country banks to stop payment. Manufacturers suffered in consequence, and the destruction of machinery recommenced.[2]

[1] Byron, *Letters,* vol. ii., p. 429.

[2] Harriet Martineau, *History of England* (1800–1815), p. 398. (Bohn's ed.)

The immediate effect of peace with France was not to diminish but to aggravate the distress. Exhausted by a long war, the Continental countries could not pay for our goods in money, for they had none to spare, nor in their own goods, for these were kept out by our protective tariff. As a consequence, in 1816 our export trade had fallen sixteen per cent., and our import trade twenty per cent., from the level reached two years before. At the same time the value of the currency rose with the prospect of a return to cash payments, and the price of commodities rose with it, but to a considerably greater extent.[1] A bad harvest came to complete the catastrophe. In 1816 the price of wheat rose from 52s. to 103s. per quarter. Rioting, accompanied by depredation, incendiarism, and machine-breaking, prevailed all over the country. It seemed as if Napoleon, though fallen, had dragged down the conquering nation in a common ruin with himself.

We have now to consider how the Industrial Terror, which was an episode in the Industrial Revolution, modified public opinion during the first years of the Peace. But that is a subject which must be reserved for the following chapter.

[1] Spencer Walpole, *History of England*, vol. i., pp. 330–31.

Chapter IV.

THE LIBERAL ODYSSEY

We have seen in the foregoing chapter how the great Napoleonic War was accompanied by a remarkable rally of Liberalism, and generally by a more hopeful and progressive tone in the leading circles of opinion. Unfortunately, that forward-looking movement received a sudden check from the economic evils which war had brought in its train. The great reaction against liberal thought of every kind commonly associated with Burke's attack on the French Revolution did not really set in with full virulence until the years following Waterloo, when all danger from France was over. In the early nineties it had been made clear enough that the English people were fairly satisfied with the Government under which they lived, and certainly had no wish to imitate the behaviour of their neighbours across the Channel. Canning's *Knife-grinder,* if it meant anything at all, meant that the poor had no political or social grievances. Pitt became unpopular not because of his repressive measures, but because of the war. The war itself became popular when it was waged to protect England from invasion or to deliver Spain from oppression. The old King grew in his subjects' affection, and the people were content to be guided by his opinion on the Catholic claims.[1]

[1] Ward, *Letters to Ivy,* p. 85.

Now, it happened that the disappearance of George III. from the political scene in 1810 nearly coincided with the beginning of that widespread distress and discontent which the war at first obscured or palliated, but which the restoration of peace brought into full relief. Royal authority passed from the most honoured and steadfast of English sovereigns to the one who as Regent and King made the royal office more despicable and more despised than it had been made by any of his predecessors since Edward II. Tories might affect an enthusiastic loyalty for the hereditary representative of the Plantagenets and Tudors; but they must have felt that one who exhibited the vices of Louis XV. without his ability, and the vacillating incompetence of Louis XVI. without his respectability, was hardly a chief round whom they could rally with much confidence of success.

The interests symbolised by this degraded dandy were diversified, enormous, and in extreme peril. Capitalism, whether agricultural or manufacturing, was directly threatened by mob-violence, and indirectly threatened by the agitation for Parliamentary Reform. Those who advocated a large addition to the popular element in the House of Commons made no secret of their intention to use it as leverage for abolishing the protective tariff which mill-owners and landlords alike regarded as necessary to their existence. What was at least equally serious, the fundholders were threatened with the loss in whole or part of the interest on their investments. It was argued, not without some slight show of reason, that most of the war loans had been contracted in a depreciated paper

currency, and that therefore to pay the interest in gold would be robbing the poor to make the rich still richer. A reduction of twenty per cent. or so on the dividends was freely discussed; and to make up for the contemplated cutting-down of taxes all round it seemed not unlikely that a reformed Parliament would sponge out the debt altogether.

It has been already mentioned that Bentham, probably under the influence of James Mill, had by this time gone over to the democratic side, accepting even the extreme proposal of universal suffrage. Law reform had always been the object nearest to the heart of the old philosopher himself, and it had been adopted as a standing article in the programme of his followers. Now his contemplated reforms avowedly struck at the profits of the legal profession, and so far were likely to throw the whole of that influential body, conservative enough by nature, into the ranks of the Tory party. No professional interest (except the hangman's) was directly touched by Romilly's endeavours to reduce the number of capital offences; but none who trembled for the security of their property could view without alarm proposals calculated to diminish the penalties by which it was safeguarded.

Of all corporations the Anglican clergy, with the Bishops and the Universities at their head, were by training and association the most uncompromising enemies of progress, the most disposed to identify innovation of any kind with the extreme of revolutionary Radicalism. Their privileged position in the State was endangered by the Catholic and Dissenting claims, their tithes by free trade in corn, their Catechism by unsectarian education,

their infallible Bible by the advance of science, and all these collectively by whatever was involved in Parliamentary Reform.

These general motives for resistance were strengthened by the presence within the Church of gross abuses upheld by a powerful though small body of opinion, while those who suffered by them, though many, were weak and disunited. As an illustration of the length to which obstruction could be carried on such points, it may be mentioned that when Perceval, a Tory of the Tories, and personally most clerical, proposed in 1808 a measure compelling absentee pluralists to provide resident curates at a moderate salary for their neglected benefices, his Bill was opposed by the whole bench of Bishops, and rejected on the third reading without a division by the House of Lords. It was carried in 1813 by Lord Harrowby, a Liberal Peer, "amid the suppressed murmurs of the holders of Church property,"[1] but not without leaving a presumption of what might be expected from them in the coming conflict.

Finally, a much more limited but not insignificant contribution to Tory opinion came from the West Indian planters. With the success of the agitation for the abolition of the slave trade in 1807, Wilberforce and his friends turned their efforts against slavery itself, which before that had been carefully left out of the campaign. And the planters could point to this rise in the demands of their assailants as a warning example of what might follow on a first concession to Jacobinical attacks on the

[1] Walpole, *Life of Spencer Perceval,* vol. i., pp. 286–87.

rights of property in the name of the rights of man.

This coalition of prejudice and panic put an end for many years to the Liberal influences which had more or less asserted themselves in the Cabinet or in Parliament after Pitt's death. Power steadily gravitated to the most reactionary members of the Tory party. In 1810 the struggle for the Premiership between Canning and Perceval was decided in Perceval's favour, his rival quitting the Government and not returning to office until 1816, when he rejoined it to defend the policy of repression. The Marquess Wellesley resigned in 1812, and remained in opposition as a pro-Catholic and Free Trader for nearly ten years. Huskisson, the future Free Trader, gave his support in 1815 to extreme Protectionist legislation. After Perceval's death the leading spirits in the Regent's Government were Liverpool, Eldon, Castlereagh, and Sidmouth. All four opposed Catholic Emancipation, at that time the irreducible minimum of concession to Liberal principles—Castlereagh on grounds of expediency, his colleagues on grounds of sincere conviction. Liverpool was an average stolid Tory, distinguished only for his unrivalled power of keeping in office. Eldon, the Lord Chancellor, was Conservatism itself personified; he hated innovation as such and resisted it at all points, defending not only every political abuse, but even the atrocities of the English criminal law. The Court of Chancery is largely indebted for its evil reputation to the dilatoriness with which he allowed enormous arrears of business to accumulate during his tenure of office. As a statesman Castlereagh was the ablest and best of the four. His

administration of the war during its last years proved highly efficient; and at a critical moment he held together the European coalition against Napoleon when everything depended on its stability. After the peace he became the most unpopular member of the Government, chiefly because as Leader of the House of Commons he had to defend its policy of repression and of resistance to Reform. In reality, so far as any single individual deserved to be made responsible for the state of the country, Sidmouth was that one. This pompous mediocrity is best known to history as the Addington who replaced Pitt in the confidence of George III. when the understanding on which the union with Ireland was carried had to be violated, that the royal conscience might be relieved at the expense of the nation's honour and safety. Raised to the peerage under the title of Viscount Sidmouth, the same inglorious leader contrived to make his way into every subsequent Cabinet but one, until he became Home Secretary in 1812, continuing in that office for the next ten years. His administration is marked by riot and conspiracy on the one side, repression and bloodshed on the other. In 1819 a large open-air meeting held in St. Peter's Fields, near Manchester, to petition for Parliamentary Reform, was attacked by mounted yeomanry and dispersed with some loss of life. At about the same time a batch of coercive measures known as the Six Acts were passed, some of them legitimate enough, but others having for their sole object to put down all adverse criticism of the Government at public meetings or in the Press. Twenty years before, Portland's administration

of the Home Office had preserved order without anything like the same ferocity. It must be owned that some of the Whig leaders supported Sidmouth's coercive measures; but they were not responsible for the policy that made force the only remedy for discontent.

The weakest, or at any rate the most assailable point in the Tory position was, as I have said, the character of the Regent, whose vices did the cause of free representation as much good as the virtues of his father had done it harm. For a time the popularity of his daughter and heiress, the Princess Charlotte, screened him and his office from attack; with her death the last hope of the English Monarchy seemed to expire, leaving it a prey to internecine strife. For if the Regent's daughter was dead, his wife, the unfortunate Caroline of Brunswick, Princess of Wales, still lived, serving the Opposition as a pawn with which to hold the future King in check for the present, and to push up to queen for his destruction at an opportune crisis of the game. So long as the Whigs counted on his favour she had been a Tory heroine; after he deserted them she passed to their side. When the Continent was reopened to English travellers, the Princess, a born Bohemian, took the opportunity of going abroad, and wandered about in very compromising company, watched everywhere by her husband's spies. On the death of George III., by Brougham's orders,[1] she at once returned to England, claiming

[1] This has recently been placed beyond all doubt by the publication of a private letter from Brougham to Creevey. (*Creevey Papers*, vol. i., p. 297.)

to be officially recognised as Queen. On landing she found herself the heroine of the Reform party and of the people. Her journey from Dover to London was a triumphal progress. The King and his Ministers met the attack by laying before the House of Lords a Bill to dissolve his marriage and to deprive the Queen of her title, evidence of her alleged misconduct being supplied in justification of the measure. For several weeks the country was deluged with filth. A general impression prevailed that the King was morally though not legally debarred by his own profligacy from seeking to divorce a wife who on the least merciful view had been much less guilty than himself. The Bill passed its third reading in the Lords by a small majority; then it was dropped amid the rejoicings of the people. How little they cared for her personally, how entirely their jubilation was meant as an expression of passionate hostility to the King, appeared soon afterwards, when her frantic efforts to be present at his coronation were met with indifference by some and with insult by others in the vast multitude assembled round the approaches to Westminster Abbey. A few days after the ceremony Caroline died broken-hearted, but the work for which Brougham had used her was accomplished. The personal power of the monarch had received a mortal blow, although it still lingered for several years in the agonies of dissolution, with influence enough to prevent the formation of a united and powerful executive.

Great events do not spring from trifling causes; but these really do determine what after all is a trifling circumstance in great events, that is the

precise moment of their occurrence. What people called the Queen's Trial was such a trifling event. By it we can date with precision the beginning of a new era, just as by the divorce of Catherine of Arragon we can date with precision the beginning of the English Reformation. Brougham, ablest and most energetic of the first Edinburgh Reviewers, and since 1815 a Parliamentary power of the first order, attained the zenith of popularity by his defence of the Queen before the House of Lords. This position made him a sort of link between the Radicals, with whom he had become disgusted, and the kid-glove Whigs of Holland House, who held scornfully aloof from the dirty work of agitation. On the other hand, the Ministry was weakened to an equal extent by the secession of Canning. This had been postponed till after the withdrawal of the Divorce Bill, but was understood to be connected with an attachment of old standing for the Queen, which made him unwilling to share in the responsibility for her persecution. How great was the loss is shown by the fact that his eloquence had just before this induced the House to reject a motion of Brougham's tending to abridge the power of the Crown by a rearrangement of the King's Civil List.[1] Next year the weakened and divided Ministry had to accept an important economical reform proposed by Joseph Hume, a disciple of Bentham, and largely to reduce the expenditure in deference to the demand of the people.

Under the terrible stress of the Tory reaction

[1] Walpole, vol. ii., pp. 88–89.

Whitbread and Romilly had committed suicide, Francis Horner died young, Ponsonby not indeed young, but prematurely. It was now the turn of those in power to succumb. Within little more than a twelvemonth Liverpool temporarily withdrew from public life, disabled by a domestic calamity, Sidmouth wearily surrendered the Home Office, and Castlereagh, now Marquess of Londonderry, died by his own hand. These things were not accidents, but incidents of strife, almost of civil war.

The triumph of titled obstruction was over, and untitled reformers made their way into the seats of power. Canning became Foreign Minister, forced on the reluctant King by public opinion; and in returning to office he also returned to the Liberal principles of his youth. Robert Peel, who had already begun to accept the guidance of public opinion, took Sidmouth's place as Home Secretary. Huskisson was not indeed made what he ought to have been, Chancellor of the Exchequer, the incompetent Vansittart being relieved in that exalted position by the somewhat less incompetent Robinson; but as President of the Board of Trade he directed the financial policy of England and initiated those great Free Trade measures which were to restore the prosperity she had lost. Eldon still unhappily remained Chancellor, to the ruin of his broken-hearted suitors; but it was beyond his power to arrest the progress of Criminal Law Reform. This had been long and unsuccessfully advocated by Romilly, a disciple of Bentham. After his death Mackintosh took up the work and

scored a first victory over the Government in 1819. Next year he persuaded Parliament to repeal the death-penalty for private stealing in shops.[1] In 1823 he proposed a more comprehensive scheme of reform, but was induced to surrender it into the hands of Peel, by whom much of it was carried out during his tenure of the Home Office. In the same year Peel also put an end to the depreciated paper currency, which Cobbett, the chief Radical journalist, had long denounced. In 1824 the Combination Laws making strikes penal were repealed.

Still the true chief of the remodelled Government and its most magnetic figure was not Peel, but he whom Heine has called the great, the noble, the adored Canning,[2] a phrase which, coming from such a writer, proves Canning to have been also the acknowledged leader of European Liberalism. His name brings us back to that world-wide movement by which the French Revolution, after its perversion and degradation under Napoleon, after its apparent overthrow by the allied Sovereigns, resumed its chequered course in a series of conflicts whose final outcome is not yet decided.

We have seen how French aggressions on the independence of other nationalities first alienated English Liberal opinion from the Revolutionary cause, and ultimately brought the English reactionaries themselves to become champions of liberty, not only in the Iberian Peninsula, but all over

[1] *Life of Mackintosh,* vol. ii., p. 390.

[2] Heine, *Englische Fragmente,* xii. Alison says that he was "looked up to as the head of the Liberal party throughout the globe" (*History of Europe,* 1815–52; vol. iv., p. 119).

Europe. It now remains to add that the peoples were induced to join their hereditary Sovereigns in the final revolt against Napoleon by an understanding that the recovery of independence from a foreign power would be followed by the concession of constitutional liberty at home. That understanding was violated, and the restored Governments had nothing more pressing than to reinstate, so far as they could, the old system of privilege and superstition, entering even into a compact, known as the Holy Alliance, for mutual assistance in repressing their subjects' revolutionary aspirations. With this compact the English Cabinet had nothing to do, although Castlereagh was accused, wrongly as would seem, of giving it a moral support. Still, the unjust treatment of Ireland, to which he had made himself a party, and his coercive rule at home, placed him in line with the Continental despots. Had he lived to attend the Congress of Verona, it is possible that public opinion might have assigned him a very different position—the position actually won by his successor, Canning.

Years before Napoleon's fall a movement destined to represent, and represent alone, the revolutionary cause during the first period of legitimist reaction, had begun to take shape in the Western hemisphere. The French conquest of Spain gave the Spanish colonies in America a long-desired opportunity for asserting their independence ; and by the time that the French armies had cleared out of Spain her dominion in the New World was practically at an end. Nevertheless, the conflict, which was fought out with far more heroism than that between England and her Colonies, continued

to rage for many years, furnishing a new field for their energies to great numbers of English soldiers and sailors whom the peace had thrown out of work, and promising to furnish English manufacturers with new markets for their wares when the Spanish monopoly should have been definitely abolished.

At length the sword of oppression turned against its own heart. The armies assembled in the Spanish sea-ports for the re-conquest of America mutinied and declared for constitutional government. The movement spread with electric rapidity all over the country, and in a few weeks King Ferdinand swore fidelity to the Constitution of 1812. Naples followed suit immediately, and another Ferdinand went through the same comedy as his cousin at Madrid. In Portugal the tyrannical regency was deposed and a representative assembly convened. Next year an abortive insurrectionary movement broke out in Roumania, followed by a more hopeful Greek rising in the Peloponnesus and the Ægean islands.

Reaction followed close on the heels of Revolution. Before Greece had taken fire an Austrian army entered Naples and reinstated the perjured King in the authority he had so abused. Turkish vengeance was even more prompt and terrible. Four Greek Archbishops were hanged on the Easter Day of the same year. Then followed a series of massacres, among the worst of those by which Ottoman dominion is periodically signalised, culminating in the awful devastation of Chios, where 70,000 Greeks were either slaughtered or sold into slavery during the spring of 1822.

Russia, so far from protecting the Greek Christians, left them to their fate, and occupied herself with putting down liberty elsewhere. For this purpose the Czar was preparing to send his Cossacks into Spain, when France intervened and overthrew the new Constitution by force of arms. Among the victims of absolutist vengeance was Diaz, the William Wallace of Spain, justly famed under the name of the Empecinado for the part he had played as a guerilla chief in the War of Independence against Napoleon.

At the first outbreak of the European Revolution a Congress of the great Powers assembled at Verona (1822) to deliberate on the situation. Wellington represented England. He did not love popular government; but neither, probably, did he like to see the country he had freed from French vassalage brought again under the same yoke by Napoleon's puny successor. Canning, who had begun the Peninsular War, and who was an enthusiast for national independence, hated to see England's most glorious work undone. But he could not stop France, who this time had the armed force of the Continent at her back. Two things, however, he could do: he could protect America from the same sort of treatment, and he could also protect Portugal. At the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1818 the Czar had proposed that the fleets of Europe should be sent to crush Republicanism in South America. Castlereagh raised no objection, but declined on England's behalf to join in the work. In 1823 a well-founded impression prevailed that France, either singly or with her allies, designed to follow up the conquest of Spain by a naval expedition for the reduction of

her American colonies; with a prospect of indemnifying herself by territorial acquisitions for the expenses of the war. Canning intimated that England would not tolerate such an enterprise; and as he disposed of a fleet superior to all the fleets of the world put together, his remonstrances were listened to with respect. Much to the disgust of the Powers, he also recognised the South American Republics, and gave an additional safeguard to their independence by suggesting to the President of the United States what is still known as the Monroe Doctrine—that is, the principle that no European State may acquire new territory on the American Continent or interfere in the domestic concerns of any American community.

Canning's next move was made in defence of Portugal. Don Miguel, the absolutist heir to the Portuguese throne, had conspired against the Cortes, and levied troops to destroy the new Constitution. He was driven into exile; but his army retired to the other side of the Spanish frontier, and, under the protection of the restored Spanish monarchy, waged war against the liberties of their country. Acting under a treaty that obliged England to defend her old ally against foreign attack, Canning sent troops to Lisbon. Secured by their presence, the Liberal Portuguese Regency drove Don Miguel's forces back into Spain, where the reactionary government now saw itself obliged to disown and disband them.

However, neither South America nor Portugal were interesting enough in themselves to command the undivided enthusiasm of Liberal opinion. That could only be awakened by the cause of Greece. Here the influence of literature acted

more powerfully than political oratory or journalism to enlist the sympathies of Englishmen. Members of the governing aristocracy had not forgotten their classical education. "We are all Greeks!" exclaimed Shelley. Byron succeeded best when he struck this chord of sympathy in the Second Canto of *Childe Harold,* in the *Giaour,* and in the *Corsair.* True, the same qualities that endeared the Chosen People of Culture to these two young poets were regarded with some dread and suspicion by politicians of the opposite school. The best Greek history then existing, Mitford's, published between 1784 and 1810, is, as Mill observes, "penetrated with the anti-Jacobin spirit in every line," and the *Quarterly Review* "laboured as diligently for many years to vilify the Athenian republic as the American."[1] But, on the other hand, quite apart from classic traditions, much in the Greek cause appealed to the romanticism generally associated with reactionary political opinions. Elsewhere the revolutionary cause was, truly or not, represented by its enemies as an anti-Christian crusade. In Greece it stood for Christianity; and Shelley, himself an unbeliever, in the Preface to his *Hellas,* unhesitatingly denounces the Turks as the enemies of Christianity, while in a chorus of the drama itself he contrasts the immortal cross of Christ with the dying moon of Mahomet. It is not wonderful, then, that the last of France's most Christian Kings "manifested on behalf of the suffering Christians of Greece a chivalrous warmth of heart, a gallantry, and a generosity which did honour to his character."[2]

[1] *Dissertations and Discussions,* vol i., p. 113.
[2] Stapleton, *Life of Canning,* vol iii., p. 226.

In Byron's poetry the classic and romantic currents are so perfectly fused together that none can tell what share each element contributed to the genius which reaches its highest expression in *The Isles of Greece*. His, therefore, was the decisive word; his, even more, the decisive deed. No poet's personality had ever counted for so much as an element in his literary success, and that even when it was understood to be the personality of a reckless and faithless voluptuary. How incalculable, then, must have been its effect on public opinion when Byron came forward no longer as the sentimental singer of Greek woes, but as an armed soldier in the war for Greek independence! His life, had it been prolonged, would have done less for European emancipation than his death; death on the field would have been less effective than death from exposure and fever; for that, so uncoveted, made the heroism of his self-devotion more apparent.

Canning had a much harder part to play than Byron's, and he fell in the war of opinion by a more tragic fate, bequeathing ruin to his party and victory to his two great rivals, Peel and Earl Grey; but victory also to principles he held more dear than any party distinctions. His sympathies were with Greece, and what in the circumstances could be done to save her he did, although now it seems little enough. Then, as half a century later, the problem was to use Russia as an instrument for coercing the Porte, without at the same time allowing the Czar to seize Constantinople, with the chance of kindling a European war. Just before his death Canning, with the help of France, had nearly solved the problem; and, although the

decisive battle of Navarino, which he did not live to see, may have gone beyond his intentions, it was no more than the natural result of his policy. A still more momentous result was the breaking-up of the Holy Alliance, the isolation of the German Powers, and the definite enrolment of France among the friends of European liberty.

On Liverpool's retirement in 1827, Canning, who had long been the ruling spirit of the Cabinet, became, in name as well as in fact, Prime Minister of England. His advent to the supreme dignity marked another step in Liberalism, for it involved the transfer of office from Tories to Whigs on a considerable scale, besides securing the independent support of some Whigs who did not take office.

The party shibboleth at that time was Catholic Emancipation. Canning renounced the support of his ablest colleagues because they opposed it; he accepted the co-operation of former opponents because they supported it, and this notwithstanding the King's known objection to Emancipation. It seems, therefore, certain that, had the Prime Minister lived, it would have formed a part of his legislative programme. Nevertheless, there is reason to believe that the great popular chief, although in this instance he represented the most enlightened opinion of the country, and although the Radicals, no less than the Whigs, were with him, did not represent the opinion of the masses. To understand how this came about we must go a little further back.

The Catholic question, when it first arose, did

not particularly interest the English people. Had George III. agreed with Pitt, they would have tolerated the presence of some fifty Irish Catholic gentlemen and of a few English Catholic peers in Parliament; but, as George III. did not agree, they thought he should have his own way even at the expense of losing their trusted pilot before he had brought the ship of State into port. At the general election of 1807, following immediately after the King had dismissed his Ministers because they proposed to admit Catholic officers to high commands in the army and navy, some of the leading Whigs lost their seats because they had opposed his Majesty's wishes. A shrewd observer, himself a Liberal, remarked at the time that "as long as the King is anti-Catholic the people will be so too."[1] A few years later royal authority passed to the Regent, and in 1812 Emancipation seemed in sight; but personal difficulties prevented the formation of a Whig Administration, and, unhappily for the peace of Ireland, the moment for generous concession passed by, never to return.

With the end of the war English opinion took a turn most unfavourable to religious justice. For, until Napoleon fell, various Biblical prophecies, formerly supposed to be predictions of the Papal power, had been interpreted as referring to his career. He was the little horn in Daniel, or he was Antichrist. After Waterloo, Protestant theology reverted to the old exegesis. Besides, the claim to personal infallibility as Head of the Church, now put forward more audaciously than

[1] Ward, *Letters to Ivy*, p. 85.

ever on the Pope's behalf, produced an unreasonable, but not unnatural, irritation among those who disowned his authority altogether. We can therefore understand why, when Canning accepted office in 1816, "the opinions of the great mass of the population in England had become, more than they had been, hostile to Emancipation."[1]

No progress was made until the beginning of the great Liberal movement in 1821. At that date the unreformed House was probably more enlightened than the people. At any rate, it passed a Catholic Relief Bill by a majority of 19.[2] This was rejected in the Lords by a majority of 39, with the heir presumptive to the throne at its head. Then Canning passed a Bill through the Commons admitting, as an experiment, Catholic peers to sit in the Upper House; but the Lords rejected this also by a majority of 42. In two subsequent sessions the conflict of opinion between the Houses was repeated, once before and once after Canning's death. As usual it was settled by that *ultima ratio populorum,* the threat of an appeal to physical force. A great demagogue, Daniel O'Connell, had so united and organised the Irish demand for justice that its voice spoke with irresistible effect to an English Legislature divided against itself. After refusing to accept Canning's policy during his life, Peel and Wellington were obliged to put it into execution as his heirs, under the form of a humiliating submission to violence.

Yet, at the cost of civil war, force might have

[1] Stapleton, *Life of Canning,* vol. i., p. 117.
[2] May, *Constitutional History of England,* vol. ii., p. 380.

been met by force. Wellington declared that, by resisting Emancipation, he might have made himself the most popular of Ministers; and during the progress of the measure through Parliament innumerable petitions against it poured in to the King.[1] As has been already mentioned, this anti-Catholic feeling went back to the end of the war, being in fact the outcome of a wider and older movement. Besides starting a number of new sects, Methodism had given new life to the religious communities already in existence. From his accession George III. had been noted for personal piety, although his example does not seem to have influenced Court or official circles. The first religious minister of whom we hear is Perceval, much occupied with Church questions, and no less regular in his attendance at public worship than Pitt had been in his absence from it. Still more punctilious was Wilberforce, who called Perceval's attention to the danger of convoking Parliament for a Monday, whereby gentlemen who lived at a distance from London might be tempted into Sunday travelling.[2] Reaction in religion went hand in hand with reaction in politics. Southey became at once a Tory and a High Churchman. Wordsworth remained true to his early sympathies for a much longer period, but definitely enrolled himself on the same side as his friend and neighbour after the Peace—driven to it probably by the rising storm of discontent among the poor. In 1821 he wrote, *invitâ Minervâ,* a long series of

[1] Sir Herbert Maxwell, *Life of Wellington,* vol. ii., pp. 240 and 237.

[2] Walpole, *Life of Perceval,* vol. i., p. 303.

Ecclesiastical Sonnets, strongly anti-Papal, and directed towards the glorification of the Anglican Church on its Protestant side. In 1816 and 1817 Coleridge published two "Lay Sermons," proposing to remedy the evils affecting England by a mystical interpretation of the Bible (in whose inspiration, by the way, he at no time believed) and glorifying Perceval as "the best and wisest statesman this country has possessed since the Revolution."[1] All three poets were passionately opposed to Emancipation, Wordsworth in particular prophesying that Catholic members of Parliament would co-operate with "other dissenters and infidels" in pulling down the Church of England.[2] They probably would have resisted the grant of a million for building new churches, voted in 1818 at a time of great financial distress, and the further grant of half a million for the same purpose voted in 1824, of which we hear that it was "not popular in the country."[3]

Coleridge, in his first Lay Sermon, cautiously deprecates the interpretation of Scripture prophecies as miraculous predictions of events in modern history. But for the mass of uneducated British Protestants they had no other meaning and no other interest. The nervous strain set up by the great war continued after its close, and bred a diseased craving for new sources of excitement. These were supplied to some extent by the pietistic movement; but intense religious feeling needs to be discharged along lines of greater activity than Bible-readings

[1] Coleridge, *Church and State*, p. 306.
[2] Knight, *Life of Wordsworth*, vol. iii., p. 57.
[3] Walpole, *History of England*, vol. ii., p. 161.

and prayer-meetings can supply. Some threw themselves into an agitation for the abolition of West Indian slavery. Others started missions for the conversion of Mohammedans and heathens to Christianity, or for the conversion of Irish and Continental Papists to what they were pleased to call the Gospel. Now that Southern Europe lay open to proselytism no more seemed needed for its regeneration than the gratuitous and wholesale distribution of Bibles and Testaments among the benighted inhabitants. But there were more sanguine and enthusiastic spirits whom even the prospect of a new Reformation could not content. These looked forward with a fearful joy to some great catastrophe heralding the Second Advent and the end of the world. They soon found a preacher to their mind in the person of a tall, handsome, and eloquent young Scotchman named Edward Irving, now best known as the early friend of Jane Welsh and Thomas Carlyle. In 1822 Irving came up to London, and soon attracted crowds to the chapel where his oratorical gifts were first displayed. Canning paid his preaching a high compliment in the House of Commons; and the fashionable world flocked to hear his impassioned proclamation of judgment to come. In 1827 he moved to a larger church, where audiences of a thousand persons hung spell-bound on his lips. That date marks the climax of his career as an index of popular religious feeling in England. Subsequently his name becomes associated with struggles and delusions which do not concern us here. Let it suffice to mention that, even so late as the close of 1831, millenarian enthusiasm still prevailed to

such an extent that anyone who doubted the near approach of the Second Advent was denounced by the majority of religious persons as an infidel,[1] even the enlightened Dr. Arnold of Rugby holding that a terrible catastrophe of some sort might be soon expected.[2]

Side by side with these noisy manifestations of reactionary mysticism a counter-current of steadier and more voluminous energy had set in. The progress of English Rationalism seemed to have been long arrested, but in reality it had been working underground, giving even such occasional evidences of continued activity as Gibbon's Roman History for scholarship and Paine's *Age of Reason* for popularity. Like the religious revival, it gained new prominence with the Peace. We have seen how, long before the end of the war, education had become a foremost interest in English life, and had at once connected itself with religious controversy. Lancaster went for simple Bible-teaching, Bell for Church control and the Catechism. Bentham took up their method of mutual instruction, and made it the basis of an elaborate educational system which he proposed at once to put into practice in a sort of college to be built on his own grounds. The religious difficulty was to be got rid of by eliminating religion altogether from the proposed curriculum. Various titled and wealthy persons promised their support, but withdrew it on finding that the secular scheme was denounced as dangerous by the clergy. Bentham retorted by an unsparing criticism of the Church Catechism, an attack on the personal

[1] Thirlwall, *Letters Literary and Theological,* p. 101.
[2] Stanley, *Life of Arnold,* vol. i., p. 252 (8th ed.).

character of St. Paul, and an *Analysis of Natural Religion,* written in collaboration with George Grote, the future historian of Greece. The object of this last work is to prove that the belief in God and a future life is most pernicious to human happiness, both by its direct effect in exciting terror, and indirectly by leading to the domination of an anti-social priestly class.

Although Bentham's scheme of secular education had at first no success, it remained a fundamental principle with his followers, and was realised, if only to a very limited extent, by the establishment of University College, London. The idea of that institution first came from the poet Campbell, a staunch Liberal, and was promptly taken up by the Benthamites, who, in association with other independent thinkers, raised £160,000 for the endowment of a college, opened in 1828, from whose curriculum religious instruction was omitted, and for the tenure of whose chairs no theological qualification was required.[1]

However, the main stream of opposition to religious orthodoxy was not represented by Bentham's school with its anonymous publications, but by the older Radicalism, whose most popular exponent was William Cobbett. Like Bentham, this powerful journalist had begun as an enemy of democracy, but, like him, had come to think that electoral reform supplied the only remedy for bad government. Imprisoned and heavily fined for showing up a cruel case of flogging in the army during the war, he became after the Peace the most widely

[1] Leslie Stephen, *The English Utilitarians,* vol. ii., p. 32.

read advocate of retrenchment, Free Trade, full representation of the people, and Catholic Emancipation, always basing his views on thoroughly practical considerations and on a profound study of English history. Driven out of the country by Sidmouth's repressive Acts, he took refuge in America. On a former visit to the United States he had attacked Priestley as a "Unitarian infidel," and helped to circulate slanderous stories about Paine. It may be gathered from his sneers at dissent and deism that Cobbett was at that time a good Churchman. Agreement with Paine's views on paper currency led him to form a juster estimate of the democratic freethinker's moral character. Paine died at New York in 1809, and a story gained credence that he had recanted on his deathbed. Cobbett proved by cross-examining the witnesses that no such recantation had been made. What was more he dug up Paine's bones, and carried them with him on his return to England in 1819, prophesying that these relics would effect a reformation in Church and State.[1]

Much ridicule has been cast on Cobbett's proceedings by people who would see nothing to laugh at or deplore in the second funeral of Napoleon, the transfer of whose body from St. Helena to Paris led on to the despotism and superstition of the Second Empire. At any rate, the arrival of Paine's bones in England coincides with a great revival of interest in his writings and the beginning of a sharp struggle between liberty of religious opinion and authority, in which liberty finally won.

[1] Moncure Conway, *Life of Paine,* vol. ii., p. 428.

The Regency, although a period of political reaction and reviving bigotry, was not on the whole, till near its end, a period of persecution. In 1812 Eaton, a bookseller, was prosecuted for selling the *Age of Reason,* and sentenced by Lord Ellenborough to be imprisoned for eighteen months and to stand for an hour in the pillory. He "underwent his public punishment amid the waving of hats and cheering of the crowd, not a voice or arm being raised against him."[1] At the end of 1817 another bookseller, William Hone, was prosecuted and underwent three distinct trials, the second and third also before Lord Ellenborough, for publishing certain alleged blasphemous parodies on the Litany, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments. Notwithstanding the violent efforts of his judges to procure a condemnation, Hone succeeded in persuading the jury that his sole object had been to throw ridicule on political abuses, and on each occasion he was acquitted.

Such a plea as Hone's could not be raised by Richard Carlile. This remarkable man edited and sold, among other books of a similar character, Paine's theological writings. After a three days' trial he was sentenced to a fine of £1,500 and eighteen months' imprisonment—a term extended to six years from his inability to pay the fine. The shopmen who sold his books all that time were also seized and imprisoned—the places of the victims being filled up immediately by eager volunteers—until recourse was had to a machine by which the volume asked for was given out and

[1] Dowden, *Life of Shelley,* vol. i., p. 289.

payment for it received without the vendor's face being seen by the purchaser. Large sums were raised for Carlile's benefit during his imprisonment, and on his release he found an establishment provided for him in Fleet Street, where the incriminated works were henceforth sold with impunity.

From Dorchester Gaol Carlile issued an *Address to Men of Science, calling upon them to stand forward and vindicate the Truth.* In this pamphlet he mentions the case of Professor (afterwards Sir) William Lawrence, who, according to him, was deprived of his post at the College of Surgeons for having attacked the prevalent religious beliefs in his lectures.[1] But Lawrence was an exception. Men of science under the reactionary *régime* had fallen off considerably from the standard of Priestley and Erasmus Darwin; so much so, indeed, that their most brilliant living representative, Sir H. Davy, joined the obscurantists in denouncing the new science of geology as dangerous to revealed religion, to the disgust even of Coleridge, who called the German Biblical critics infidels, while privately supporting their views.

Coleridge, in fact, contributed largely to what was now becoming a chief factor in progressive English thought—that is, renewed intercourse with the Continent. It has been seen what a powerful stimulus was given to English science and literature in the previous generation by the French Revolution and by German Romanticism. That impulse continued to operate, although with somewhat abated energy, all through the Napoleonic

[1] Carlile, *An Address, etc.,* London, 1821, p. 19.

war; with the Peace it came up again in a greatly generalised form, especially after England, under Canning's guidance, made herself the champion of popular government all over the world. English travellers dispersed themselves through every country; English readers ransacked the history and literature of all times. We find a reflex of that boundless curiosity more especially in the souls of two poetesses—in the metrical essays of Felicia Hemans, in the youthful studies of Elizabeth Barrett. It was nourished by the still fresher enthusiasm of American tourists, and returned on Britain herself by the candid admiration of foreign critics for the words and works of this victorious island at the epochs not only of its present but of its former glory.

Italy had long been a favourite haunt of English travellers. But in the eighteenth century it had been more a land of curios and connoisseurs; now it was the home of great traditions and exalted hopes, framed in scenes of corresponding magnificence. There Byron and Shelley first found their true selves, found in that environment their poetic genius doubled at a stroke. Under their lead English poetry first fully rose from a realism often petty, always didactic, to the supreme heights of true romance; but a romance definitely dissociated from superstition and reaction, linked as in the Greek War of Independence with the classical traditions of reason, self-government, and freedom. Byron had already given the signal for that alliance in the first cantos of *Childe Harold;* he confirmed it by the inspiration of Ravenna and the example of Missolonghi.

In Keats the spirit of Hellenism, considered as the kingdom of man wedded to nature, reigns without a rival. Probably he was indebted to Byron for an emancipation so complete that no trace of a struggle with supernaturalist beliefs has been left in his works. Yet, so far as Shelley and Keats follow any poetic tradition, the predecessor with whom they can best be connected is not Byron, but Southey. In *Queen Mab* the formal imitation of *Thalaba* is quite obvious; and the influence of Southey's general method and style still prevails through *Alastor,* the *Revolt of Islam,* and *Prometheus Unbound.* With Keats the dependence becomes much less visible; still the idea of choosing vast mythological subjects for poetic treatment would hardly have occurred to him, even after Spenser's example, had not the Laureate led the way in his now forgotten epics.

It is remarkable to what an extent the great literary productivity of the Regency seems connected with the diversion into poetry and fiction of genius, which in other circumstances might have been applied to practical life. Scott had in him the making of a soldier-statesman like Wellington; within the limitations assigned by fate to his ambition, he cared chiefly for making himself a great landed proprietor. Byron, never a true literary artist, might well have become another Fox; indeed, the impression made on Brougham, who cut up his juvenile verses in the *Edinburgh,* was that the young lord "had better give up poetry and apply his talents, which were considerable, to better account." At Oxford Shelley devoted himself to physical science, and, after his expulsion,

to political agitation ; while his tragic death was connected with a very businesslike scheme for establishing steam-communication between Genoa and Leghorn. Keats "impressed all his schoolfellows with a conviction of his future greatness, 'but rather in a military or some such active sphere of life than in the peaceful arena of literature.'"[1] Finally Landor, who for convenience may be included in the list, is called by De Quincey "a spirit built by nature to animate a leader in storms, a martyr, a national reformer, an arch-rebel, whom the accidents of education have turned into a contemplative recluse."[2]

There seems, then, some reason for connecting the literary splendour of the Regency and the first years of George IV. with the political stagnation and general reactionariness of the period. So long as the old King remained in power there were hopes that his successor would inaugurate a more Liberal system. The Regent's Ministers were more opposed to all reform than his father's had been, and the victory over Napoleon seemed to give Toryism a new lease of life. Then the progressists transferred their allegiance to the Princess Charlotte, and with her death in 1817 all hope expired. But Liberty, that "eternal spirit of the chainless mind," is, as Byron sang, "brightest in dungeons"; and the ideals that replace her possession burn most intensely in the darkest night. English literature has produced few greater works than some that appeared from 1814 to 1822 (the year when Canning took the helm), more especially during the last five

[1] Lord Houghton, *Life and Letters of Keats,* pp. 5–6.
[2] De Quincey, *Works,* vol. viii., p. 286.

years of the period—that is, the quinquennium following the Princess Charlotte's death. Jane Austen, finding her pen once more, adds three other masterpieces to the three left so long unpublished. Scott writes the most and the best of his novels. Byron, Shelley, Keats produce all that puts them in the first rank of poets. Note also that the very best of Byron's and Shelley's work—the fourth Canto of *Childe Harold, Manfred, Cain,* the *Vision of Judgment*, and the first Cantos of *Don Juan,* of the one, the *Cenci* and the great lyrics of the other—belong to 1818–1822; as also do Keats's most perfect things. I may add that Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria,* containing his finest extant literary criticism, appeared in 1817; and that the most brilliant of Lamb's and Hazlitt's essays belong also to the first decade of the Peace.

Among those who form this galaxy of genius some were not revolutionists. Still it seems likely that for them also the stagnation and gloom of politics gave an unwonted interest and zest to pure literature, such as it never afterwards possessed.

It may be urged that, apart from any political revival, the tragic deaths of Keats, Shelley, and Byron, followed by Scott's no less tragic bankruptcy, sufficiently account for the rapid literary decline of the twenties. And this would be true were those catastrophes just what they are commonly held to be, so many deplorable accidents. But, except in the case of Keats, they are something more, they are the revenges of reality on genius estranged from its service. What has been said of the somewhat similar fatalities so numerous at this

time among the statesmen also applies in some degree to the poets, gifted as these were with the same pushing, speculative, experimental temper. All might have said of themselves, with the same confidence as Shelley, "I always go on until I am stopped, and I never am stopped."[1] They were stopped by something still more imperious than themselves—by the physical and social forces to which their wills were not adjusted.

With the disappearance of her great poets from the scene we reach a turning-point in the intellectual history of England which, both from its importance and from the wealth of material to be discussed, makes it advisable to begin a new chapter.

[1] "Hasty, peremptory, and intolerant of contradiction" is the character Scott gives of himself under the person of Colonel Mannering. (*Guy Mannering,* chap. xvii.)

Chapter V.

DE REPUBLICA

With the eclipse of imaginative idealism involved in the dawn of a new political system, English literature becomes possessed by another idealism of a more practical kind, fed on the lessons of history and directed towards the reformation of government. The names that first engage our attention belong to historians who were also politicians—Hallam, Macaulay, Carlyle. Let us glance at their respective attitudes towards the great interests of the age.

Hallam's *Constitutional History* maintains the old Whig point of view against both Tories and Radicals. Macaulay, then an advanced Liberal, in reviewing it, as before in his Essay on Milton, vindicates the revolutionary Cromwellian side, anticipating Carlyle by twenty years. Earlier still he had passionately defended Athenian democracy against Mitford, here equally anticipating Grote. He prophesies the honour that will be paid to Machiavelli in a liberated Italy. Shelley, whose genius he could scarcely have appreciated, is extolled in the Essay on Bunyan as potentially the greatest of modern poets, nominally for qualities of which he showed no trace, but really, we must suppose, from sympathy with his political and religious theories.

Carlyle had no aptitude for literary criticism, nor any love of artistic beauty for its own sake; as a judge of poetry he can compare even less than Macaulay with Coleridge, Lamb, and Hazlitt. Yet many of his best years were devoted to doing thoroughly what William Taylor had done imperfectly—to making German literature known in England. What he appreciated was, as Goethe observed, its intellectual and moral substance rather than its form; what one may call, using a more modern term, the application of ideas to life, the desire to remove obsolete institutions, combined with the fullest recognition of their value in past ages, and of the necessity for replacing them with something more solid than a simple negation. Whether Carlyle ever saw into the genial pedantry of German life, the systematic schooling and drill of it all, interspersed with so much frolicsome enjoyment, is not clear; but he did much to remove the prevalent English conception of the Germans, as mystical dreamers or romantic sentimentalists, inherited from the first revolutionary period.

Carlyle had convinced himself early in life that the religious beliefs of his countrymen were what he called superstition. But it would seem that his attitude in this respect owed nothing to German thought; it was determined by the tradition of eighteenth-century Rationalism, by reading Voltaire and Gibbon. If anything, Germany taught him to revere the religious beliefs of the past as symbols of an eternal, indefinable reality. Thus to the outer world he appeared as a mystic, only a few intimate friends being permitted to know what abysmal negations his cloudy phraseology

concealed. Coleridge held, at bottom, much the same views, but with an ever-increasing tendency to pass off the dogma and ritual of Anglicanism, which Carlyle hated and despised, as their adequate expression. On the other hand, he had made himself acquainted, when a young man at Göttingen, with some important results of German Biblical criticism most subversive of Anglican orthodoxy as then understood ; and these he communicated to his friends in conversation, or jotted them down in the margins of his favourite English seventeenth-century divines.

Long before the great poet's opinions were made known, Herbert Marsh, afterwards Bishop of Peterborough, had translated the work of Michaelis, a Göttingen professor, on the Gospels, adopting, with some formal reservations, the principles of an exegesis really incompatible with the dogma of Scriptural infallibility. Napoleon's Continental blockade seems to have been more effective in keeping German ideas out of England than in keeping English goods out of Germany ; but with the return of peace intellectual intercourse was resumed, and English students once more went to receive instruction at Göttingen from professors who had the recommendation of being fellow-subjects of King George. There the veteran rationalist Eichhorn still taught, and he gave them his opinion of some Biblical legends in language of unmistakable significance. In 1825 young Thirlwall, afterwards Bishop of St. David's, translated Schleiermacher's *Introduction to St. Luke,* with a Preface from his own pen implying that the inspiration of the Gospels, whatever else it meant,

certainly did not guarantee their historical accuracy.

Soon afterwards Thirlwall, with the co-operation of Julius Hare, the future Archdeacon, translated Niebuhr's Roman History; and at the same time Wolf's *Prolegomena to Homer,* another work of disintegrating criticism, began to attract the attention of English scholars. From their connection with such universally interesting subjects the researches of Niebuhr and Wolf were sure to command attention in this country; while their method of using popular ballad-poetry as a key to the origin of ancient history and literature brought them into living contact with the fashionable romanticism of the day.

The two great German critics were well aware that their methods might be applied with no less success to Hebrew tradition than to Homer and Livy; but they left the application to be made by others. An English poet and scholar, afterwards, as Dean Milman, the picturesque historian of Latin Christianity, without any intention of discrediting the early Biblical narratives, retold them, in what he called a *History of the Jews,* in a style of such rhetorical romanticism as to give the impression that he regarded them as standing on the same level with other Oriental traditions, besides altogether refusing to make the divine authority responsible for the savage deeds of ancient Israel. Religious opinion was not ripe for such treatment; the book raised a storm; and the series in which it was issued had to be discontinued.

During the period covered by this and the

preceding chapter English physical science has no great discoveries to show. The old stars continue to shine, but with a greatly diminished lustre ; the new stars are still far below their meridian splendour. This interval of obscurity may be accidental ; it may also be connected in some way, not yet understood, first with the unparalleled development of imaginative literature during the Regency, then with the wave of religious excitement marked by Edward Irving's preaching, or finally with the new devotion to political philosophy, critical or constructive, from which we started, and to which we must now return.

All the political thought of the time worth remembering is contained in the writings of three Benthamites—James Mill, Ricardo, and John Austin. For intellectual power and for inspiring genius the first place among these belongs to Mill ; but the greatest single contribution to positive knowledge, and that which was also of greatest practical importance, belongs to Ricardo. His position also clearly indicates the distinction between the philosophical and the popular Radicalism of the age.

Popular Radicalism found its ablest representative in Cobbett. This incomparable journalist has already been mentioned in connection with the revived interest in Paine's freethought writings. But his chief importance is, of course, purely political. Persistently devoted to the poor, and at the same time courting notoriety for himself, he carried on an implacable war against the Government during the Regency and after, not particularly affected, as would seem, by Canning's advent

to power. A steady advocate of Catholic Emancipation and of Free Trade in corn—less perhaps from any enthusiasm for those measures than because the high Tories hated them—he looked on the heavy load of taxation under which England reeled as the chief if not the sole cause of her woes. If bread was dear, the burdens under which the land groaned were responsible for its high price. The remedy was Parliamentary Reform. Let all taxpayers have a share in the representation proportionate to their numbers, and an end will be put to that iniquitous system by which the industrious classes are pillaged in order that fundholders, jobbers, and sinecurists may flourish in idleness.

Cobbett did not stand alone in believing that taxes, as distinct from corn-duties, raised the price of bread, or at least somehow obliged the landlords and farmers to raise it. What overthrew this view was the theory of Rent, first discovered in 1777 by Dr. Anderson, then forgotten, and simultaneously rediscovered by Malthus and West in 1815. At once adopted by Ricardo, it has since become exclusively associated with his name, for the excellent reason that he alone seized its full implications and made it the foundation of a complete theory of exchange. The theory says that rent means the surplus yielded by any land over the worst land in cultivation, and that it tends to increase with the increasing pressure of population on the means of subsistence, involving as this does the putting of ever poorer soils under the plough, or, what comes to the same thing, the application of more capital with diminishing returns to the same soil. Hence it follows that rent goes entirely

into the pocket of the landlord, and amounts to a tax levied by him on the rest of the community; while the unrestricted importation of foreign corn tends to lower his rents by throwing the worst soils out of cultivation, and its exclusion to raise them by allowing the process of extending cultivation to go on. Therefore the landowner is more interested in Protection than the manufacturers are, his advantage being perpetual, while theirs is soon reduced to zero by the pressure of capital into the protected industries.

Ricardo also showed that, *cæteris paribus*, profits rise as the cost of labour falls, and that this falls when the labourer's food costs less. Hence dearer bread means higher wages and less profits: the landlord's gain is the capitalist's loss. If the labourers multiply up to the limit of subsistence, as Ricardo thought they would, Free Trade in corn only adds to their numbers, not to their wealth; if in any way the demand for work can be restricted, they reap the whole benefit of cheaper food. Thus Protection for agriculture never favours their interest, and may be directly opposed to it. The landlord then must expect to see his privileges threatened by a combination of capitalists and working-men.

Ricardo's principles were pregnant with a future agitation, undreamed of by himself, for putting an end to that monopoly of the land which enables its owners to enrich themselves at the expense of the community by taking advantage of the pressure of population on the means of subsistence. Economists might still defend the private ownership of land on grounds of expediency. But he who takes

that ground must surrender the right to describe land-nationalisation as robbery. And an appeal to expediency does not act on public opinion with anything like the same force as an appeal to justice.

Another principle of Ricardo's is that manufactured articles of which the supply can be increased without limit exchange for one another in the ratio of their cost of production, which in the last analysis is determined by the amount of labour they embody. And as the theory of rent has been used to justify land-nationalisation, so also the Ricardian theory of value has been used by socialistic economists to justify their demand that the whole produce of labour should belong to the wage-earners, by whose labour it has been created.

Finally, Ricardo has shown that by a self-adjusting machinery the precious metals, considered as instruments of exchange, tend to diffuse themselves over the whole trading world in such a way that the imports of any particular country must ultimately balance its exports. For the excess of imports, if any, being paid for in bullion, prices at home are lowered by the scarcity of money, and prices abroad are raised by its abundance, until the importing country is obliged by the resulting dearness of commodities in the rest of the world to contract its purchases; while at the same time other countries are induced by the increasing cheapness of its commodities to buy more of them, paying in bullion until the normal balance is restored. Thus, for all who could master Ricardo's theory of foreign exchanges, was dispelled the

illusion, suggested by a temporary excess of imports over exports, that the country was living on its capital, and incurring the same liability to ruin as an individual who finds himself in a similar predicament.

Ricardo wrote his *Political Economy* at the suggestion of James Mill, the managing head of the Utilitarian school, by all of whom its principles were immediately adopted. Mill himself had made a great reputation by his *History of British India,* which also belongs to the early years of the Peace. It contains a rather contemptuous appreciation of ancient Hindoo mythology and literature, which is an implicit protest of Hellenism against Oriental unreason, then as now the object of much romanticist infatuation. The author's marked admiration for the French adventurers who at one time disputed with us the empire of the Mogul seems to show that leaning to France so characteristic of Scotch rationalism. But the most distinct moral of the whole work is conveyed in its exhibition of the wrongs that can be inflicted on a helpless people by a small group of irresponsible and ill-informed rulers. James Mill repudiated the idea of conferring representative institutions on India, looking rather, as we must suppose, to the growth of an enlightened public opinion in England for a redress of her grievances. With England herself, however, the case was very different. Here the people were fit for a widely extended suffrage, and ought to get it as their only safeguard against the spoliation and oppression which government by a small minority entails.

According to James Mill, the object of government is "to secure to every man the greatest possible quantity of the produce of his labour"; and its justification is the admitted fact that the strong possess themselves of what belongs to the weak whenever they can do so with impunity. Now, granting this to be true of men in general, it must be true in particular of the men to whom government is confided. They will use their delegated authority to satisfy their appetites; and, in order to do this with safety to themselves, they will not cease to extend it until they have reduced the people under their dominion to a state of abject slavery. For this difficulty there is only one solution — the establishment of a representative democracy, with short Parliaments elected by popular constituencies. The stringent responsibilities of the governing minority will prevent them from abusing their power; an almost complete identity of their interest with the interest of the whole community will prevent the controlling majority from abusing *theirs*.

Mill's reasoning is *a priori*, and, like all *a priori* reasoning, it is based on a limited experience—in this instance the experience of old Greek city life as interpreted by Plato and Aristotle, with which his classical studies had long familiarised him, supplemented at a later period by the history of India. His absolute monarch is a Greek tyrant or a Nawab; his aristocracy an oligarchic Athenian club. A very slight extension of the same reasoning, or of the same reading, would have furnished him with equally strong arguments to the effect that an uncontrolled majority of poor voters would

use their power to plunder the rich minority, thereby bringing about the economic ruin of the community.

Macaulay, who wrote a crushing refutation of Mill's *Essay on Government,* did not fail to press this last consideration. On that occasion he only used it as an *argumentum ad hominem.* But subsequently, in his private criticism on Jefferson's legislation, and in his public attack on the People's Charter, he denounced universal suffrage as something that would infallibly lead to confiscation. Yet for those gloomy vaticinations he had none but *a priori* reasons to offer; and it was precisely for applying the *a priori* method to politics that he so severely condemned James Mill. At bottom, logical preferences had very little to do with the controversy. Mill hated the Whigs as obstructive moderates; and Macaulay attacked him with bitterness, both as an enemy of Sir James Mackintosh and as a Radical fanatic who was endangering the prospects of Whig reform by advocating an extreme democratic solution of the electoral problem. Their views differed less in reality than in appearance. In politics Macaulay was half a Benthamite, and in morals all a hedonist; while Mill would have been satisfied with a Reform Bill giving the franchise to every man with £100 a year.[1]

In philosophy the elder Mill stood at the farthest remove from that mediæval scholasticism with which he was rather invidiously identified by his young reviewer. His work on Mind, the most important contribution to British metaphysics since Brown's

[1] Denis le Marchant, *Memoir of Earl Spencer,* p. 420.

treatise *On Cause and Effect,* developes and strengthens the traditional empiricism of Locke and Hume by definitely grafting it on the psychological theory of Association. He thus furnished the Benthamites with a system of thought to pit against the revived and Germanised Platonism which Coleridge had recently recommended to Lord Liverpool as the appropriate philosophy of Toryism.[1] And no doubt Mill's *Analysis* went far to undermine the Anglican dogmatism which Coleridge ostensibly supported in the *Friend.* Yet its interest is more didactic than speculative. Mill's object is to show how the very nature of mind, rightly understood, reveals an unlimited capacity for receiving new modifications and impulses from the teacher's art. Consciousness consists of trains of impressions and ideas whose course is determined by the relative frequency with which their external excitements are presented in contiguity with one another, and the ardour of emotion under which their union is sealed. Thus he who has unravelled and reconstructed the network of Contiguous Association holds in his hands all the threads of which true belief and right action consist. And at the same stroke the utilitarian critic of traditional dogmas claiming a natural or mystical self-evidence, is enabled to strip them of their glamour by an analysis of the casual experiences and passions under which they were formed.

A programme of reform stood ready, involving a considerable amount of new legislation; and it

[1] Yonge, *Life of Lord Liverpool,* vol. ii., pp. 300 *sqq.*

was agreed that, as a preliminary, a large popular element must be introduced into the government of England. But what exactly government and legislation meant had not yet been clearly explained. This office was performed by John Austin, next to Mill and Ricardo the most powerful Benthamite thinker of the period. In a course of lectures delivered at University College, London, in 1828 and the following years, he clearly distinguished positive law, as the command of a superior enforced by penalties, from the moral law, which is a matter of individual conscience or opinion, and from laws of nature, which are laws only in a metaphorical sense. In this way such notions as divine right and natural right were quietly and respectfully, but completely eliminated from the province of jurisprudence, while the undivided authority of the State found itself exalted to a position of autocratism before unknown. According to Austin, in every independent community positive law, which is the only real law, emanates from a power acknowledging no superior and subject to no external restraint. Governments fall into two fundamental classes according as this power is exercised by one or by more than one person. What we call a limited monarchy is really an aristocracy where one of the aristocrats holds a position of peculiar prominence and dignity. But all government, whether in the hands of one or of many, is essentially absolute, since there can be no legal restraint on that which is the sole source of law, and which cannot be resisted except at the cost of splitting the community into two by civil war. Nor is this fundamental absoluteness interfered with by the

current division into the legislative, the executive, and the judicial powers. All three are concerned in making and enforcing the laws, and all are but different organs and creatures of the same ubiquitous, omnipotent authority.

Austin gives the name of "Sovereignty" to this ultimate power of issuing unquestionable orders, enforced by penalties fixed and dealt out at the pleasure of its holders; and the persons holding it he calls "the Sovereign." Thus the emotions of awe and reverence traditionally associated with a personal ruler are transferred at a stroke to the impersonal body of which the titular king constituted at that time a part of continually diminishing importance.

The idea of Sovereignty was not new, being in fact revived from the political philosophy of Hobbes. But in practice it was associated, as Hobbes meant that it should be associated, with the institution of a hereditary despotism; and Locke, as the theorist of Constitutional Government, had set against it the idea of an indefeasible social contract, whereby each individual surrendered only so much of his natural rights as was needed to protect the much greater portion still reserved as his inviolable possession. The novelty was to convert that armed and irresistible champion whom Hobbes had imaged in the frontispiece of his *Leviathan* into an instrument of innovating and liberal legislation.

In defining the notion of Sovereignty, Austin professed to be merely analysing the fundamental conditions of all civilised government as experience exhibits them in actual operation, disencumbered of the fictions under which they are habitually

concealed; nor, indeed, with his discursive, dilatory, over-scrupulous intellectual habits, was he the man to set up irresponsible autocracy as an ideal where it did not already exist. But he had begun life as a soldier; and it may well be that familiarity with the rules of military discipline led him to reflect on their ultimate source and sanction. A commanding officer can have no other authority than what he receives from the civil government, which must therefore possess an even more peremptory claim on the obedience of its subjects than belongs to an agent clothed with merely delegated rights.

It has been said that the only ruler exactly answering to the description of Austin's Sovereign was the tyrant of a Greek city-state. He might have answered that before the powers of government could be seized and abused by a great criminal they must have already existed and been employed for more tolerable ends. To have a giant's strength is not necessarily to use it like a giant.

Definitions are often, if not always, postulates. A point of view is a practical direction, and the more so the more one-sided it is. Mackintosh had said that government was organised liberty. In practice this ideal worked out as organised license and impotence. The reformers could unpack their hearts with words and fall a-cursing like very drabs, but they could hardly put a single good measure on the Statute-book. What England wanted was not more liberty—except in religion—but better government; or, rather, the creation of a new machinery for bringing the inherent powers of government into play. Such a machinery was first supplied by Parliamentary Reform.

Chapter VI.

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

"England," said Disraeli, "does not love coalitions." If she does not love them, she had, under the unreformed Parliament, very frequently to put up with them. It was no easy matter to get and keep together a ministerial majority when there could be no appeal to a coherent body of opinion in the country; accordingly, the head of the Government often had, in the common phrase, to strengthen his position by giving his opponents a share of office. Such bargains involved a certain sacrifice of principle in one of the parties concerned, and most frequently in both; nor were the qualities most in demand a sure guarantee of administrative efficiency. Eloquence and readiness in debate secured more than their fair share in the distribution of prizes, on account of the weight carried by those gifts in a sovereign assembly whose members were free to indulge their personal predilections irrespective of any responsibility to their electors or to the country at large. It has been supposed that the decline in Parliamentary oratory after the Reform Act corresponded to a decline in the ability of the speakers, due to the fact that young men of genius had not the same facilities for entering on a political career when the number of pocket or purchasable boroughs at the disposal of the party chiefs was so reduced as to be no longer available for the purpose

of introducing every desirable candidate for office into public life. It is not clear, however, that Parliamentary ability, as measured by more permanent standards, has declined at all; and the decline in eloquence is amply accounted for by another cause. There has not been the same supply, for the good reason that there has not been the same demand. Eloquence has not the same value in a House where party-leaders, at the head of solid majorities, are engaged in pushing useful measures through as in a House where it matters less what Bills are carried than what applause is won.

Whatever its advantages as a means for introducing young men to public life, the system of Parliamentary patronage had the unquestionable drawback of exposing their political integrity to serious temptations—to the temptation, in the first instance, of enlisting under the banner of the magnate who offered them a seat, and to the temptation afterwards of deserting to the side of the Minister who could make them independent of his support. Even with an assured Parliamentary position, a statesman who stood outside the aristocratic ring was obliged, in default of popular support, to make his way by more or less discreditable intrigues, or by unworthy concessions to royal demands.

I have shown in the earlier chapters of this work to what the power of the Crown amounted, and to what impotence it reduced the machinery of government, whether considered as an instrument of order or of progress.[1] The titular Sovereign, so far from

[1] *Supra*, pp. 4, 53, 74, 76, and 78.

giving concentrated energy to the will of the Sovereign in Austin's sense, acted as a drag on its movements in every direction. At last the evil corrected itself. As royalty sank into deeper and deeper contempt, Liberal opinion organised itself spontaneously under leaders drawn from the Tory ranks, and took in hand, to begin with, the destruction of the least defensible abuses. But even the mighty genius and dauntless will of Canning proved unequal to the task of safely steering a rotten bark down a torrent beset with such rocks and shoals. A few weeks after a Bill for relaxing the restrictions on the importation of foreign corn had been wrecked in the Lords, through the blundering of his own supporters, the great statesman perished by disease, as he might have perished by the headsman's stroke under a Tudor king. His Coalition Cabinet struggled on for five months, with the pitiful Goderich as its nominal head. Under it the guns went off of themselves at Navarino, putting an end at once to the tyranny of the Turks in Greece and to the tyranny of the Holy Alliance in Europe. Then came the still feebler Ministry of Wellington and Peel. Called to office as defenders of Church privileges, they signally betrayed their trust.

Up till then dissenters from the Established Church had been formally excluded from holding political offices in England, besides being subjected to sundry other disabilities by what were known as the Test and Corporation Acts. All who wished to evade the law could do so with impunity by receiving the Sacrament according to the Anglican ritual; and Protestant Nonconformists habitually had recourse to this subterfuge. But the obligation was

felt as a stigma; and the value of its repeal in 1828 on the motion of a young Whig, the celebrated Lord John Russell, with the consent of the Ministry, is evinced by Lord Eldon's passionate protest against such a dereliction of duty on the part of the Administration, the Lords, and the Bishops.

Next year Wellington and Peel not only conceded Catholic Emancipation, but themselves introduced and passed it as a Government measure. In the circumstances no other course was open to them; nevertheless, they and their party remained profoundly discredited by the surrender. What had so long been refused to reason was now avowedly granted to the threat of rebellion—an indication of the method on which future reformers might most safely rely for the satisfaction of their demands. Moreover, a most unfavourable contrast suggested itself between the political morality of the Whigs, who had submitted to so many years' exclusion from office rather than sacrifice their principles, and the political morality of the Tories, who sacrificed *their* principles to prolong their twenty years' tenure of office by some uncertain and inglorious months. Most degraded of all was the attitude of the faithless old voluptuary on the throne, who, false to his duty as a son and false to his pledges as a lover, now maundered feebly about the example of his revered father and the obligations of his Coronation oath.

If George IV. made the monarchy contemptible, his brother and successor made it ridiculous. William IV., a sailor prince, had the traditional manners of a boatswain on shore, still more accentuated by what seemed a touch of hereditary

insanity. A lover of popularity rather than of power, he had just character enough to bring a reforming Ministry into office, and not enough to defeat, although he disliked, the measure by which they revolutionised the Constitution and reduced the power of the Crown to a cipher.

With the new reign came a General Election. It was held under the shadow of that Revolution which overthrew the restored Bourbon monarchy and made the French once more a free people. Even with the very limited share of power given to the popular element by the Charter of 1814, Charles X.'s Ministers were defeated in the Chamber of Deputies by a majority of forty; and, on an appeal to the country, the victory of the Opposition received a decisive confirmation. The King replied by three Decrees, dissolving the new Chamber, altering the Constitution, and destroying the liberty of the Press. Then the people of Paris rose in arms, defeated the half-hearted troops sent to put them down, and in three days overthrew the government of priests and nobles imposed on them by the Allies in 1814. The Monarchy was provisionally maintained; but Charles X.'s place was taken by an ostentatiously *bourgeois* King, who, like William IV., walked about the streets alone with an umbrella under his arm, responding affably to the salutations of the passers-by.

The news of the glorious days of July excited the wildest enthusiasm in England and gave a decisive impulse to the cause of Parliamentary Reform at the elections then in progress.[1] It is worthy of remark

[1] Harriet Martineau, *Thirty Years' Peace,* vol. ii., p. 383.

that, although Canning hated reform, the forces he had set in motion were entirely favourable to its advance. His pro-nationalist policy broke up the Tory party and created a group of statesmen who were prepared to carry that coalition with the Whigs which he had begun to the length of absolute coalescence. By winning over France to the Greek cause he had separated her government from the German despotisms, and so left it a helpless prey to the Revolution. Even his South American policy, apart from the countenance it gave to republicanism, told accidentally in the same direction. For the new openings it afforded to our trade, by stimulating the wildest speculation, caused a vast loss of capital and brought about that terrible commercial crisis in which, among other catastrophes, Scott's whole fortune was engulfed. This, again, led to a long-continued period of distress, extended over the whole country, and still further aggravated by the bad harvest of 1829. As usual, the Government was made responsible, the more so as its policy of Free Trade, inherited from Canning, had to bear the blame of the prevalent industrial stagnation. Even Catholic Emancipation told in favour of the Reformers. For the settlement of the question gave them back the alienated affections of the English middle class, whose bigotry made them unwilling to put in power a party pledged to carry that detested measure. As Macaulay observes, with its passage "the solitary link of sympathy which attached the people to the Tories was broken; the cry of 'No Popery' could no longer be opposed to the cry of 'Reform.'"[1]

[1] *Miscellaneous Writings, Speeches, and Poems,* vol. ii., p. 430.

Liberalism had not a majority in the new Parliament, but the Ministerialists lost so many seats, and so many of the Tories returned were bitterly hostile to Wellington and Peel as apostates from Protestantism, that their position proved untenable, especially after the Duke had alienated the most moderate Reformers by a declaration of his belief in the unsurpassable perfection of the English Constitution, made without consulting his colleagues, of whom some would have gladly coalesced with the Canningites on the basis of a compromise with the popular demands. Thus disunited and unsupported, his Ministry fell before an adverse vote within a fortnight after Parliament met.

These details are important because they show that the constitution Wellington pronounced ideally perfect had ended by simply making it impossible for the King's Government to be carried on. Not merely a certain number of boroughs, but the whole system was rotten. A really strong aristocratic system might have resisted popular clamour with success ; but such a system was incompatible with the power of the Crown on the one hand, and of the popular element in the House of Commons on the other—forces by which the nobles were permanently split into two factions, appealing to one or other of them for support. The sole remedy was to transfer sovereignty from this shifting chaos to some one part of the community sufficiently powerful and homogeneous to outweigh all the other parts put together, or at least any combination of parts ever likely to be formed in opposition to its will.

Such a body lay ready to hand in the middle classes of England, understanding by that name the whole mass of citizens who were neither obliged to maintain themselves by manual labour nor enabled to live in idleness on inherited property. In numbers a small minority of the whole people, they possessed by far the largest share of its accumulated wealth and educated intelligence, with probably on an average more than their proportionate share of its morality—advantages still further enhanced by the continual accession to their ranks of the best and ablest men from the working classes, and of those who were compelled by narrow means to descend from the aristocracy and to seek for a living in the professions. With very few exceptions, all that makes England great owed its origin to members of this class; and she would have been far richer in the elements of national well-being had not its development been repressed by the superincumbent weight of a territorial oligarchy whose acres were broader than their minds.

The leading Reformers agreed in thinking that the object of a great readjustment of the representation should be to place supreme power in the hands of the middle class. In advocating a wide popular suffrage with or without a small property qualification, James Mill, an advanced Radical, argued that the working-men electors would be guided by "the intelligence of that virtuous rank who come the most immediately in contact with them.....to whom they fly for advice and assistance in all their numerous difficulties.....to whom their children look up as models for imitation, whose

opinions they hear daily repeated and account it their honour to adopt."[1] And he had no doubt that the middle class was "that portion of the community of which, if the basis of Representation were ever so far extended, the opinion would ultimately decide." Brougham also—no Radical, but a conservative Whig—identifies the people of England with the middle classes, "the genuine depositaries of sober, rational, intelligent, and honest English feeling, looked up to by the populace as their kind and natural protectors."[2]

Now it was just because the middle classes were so representative of the people, so wealthy and so intelligent, that some thoughtful and far-sighted English statesmen dreaded their advent to power. They saw that the House of Commons had become, in Canning's words, "the preponderant element of the Constitution." But "if it were to add to its real active governing influence such an exclusively popular character.....as would arise from the consciousness that it was the immediately deputed agent for the whole people and the exclusive organ of their will, the House of Commons, instead of enjoying one-third part of the power of the State, would in a little while absorb the whole." Neither the House of Lords nor the Crown could "presume to counteract the supreme authority of the nation assembled" in Parliament, with the result that we should risk losing "that equality and co-ordination of powers among the three branches of our present Constitution in which its beauty, its strength, its

[1] *Essay on Government,* p. 32.
[2] *Speeches,* vol. ii., pp. 606–11.

stability, and the happiness of those who live under it consist."[1]

So, with the prescience of genius, spoke Canning in 1822; and such doubtless was the view taken by many brought up, like young Gladstone, "under the shadow of his great name."

There was this much truth in the argument for the supreme excellence of our balanced Constitution, that a weak and even rotten Government had favoured the growth of individual enterprise and genius in England for the last two generations. But then that very development had itself created a demand for reforms which only a strong Government could carry through. The most brilliant of the newly-elected Whig members, a thoroughly middle-class man, who had won his seat—a pocket borough of Lord Lansdowne's—by attacking Bentham while himself a Benthamite as regards legal reform, the Edinburgh reviewer Macaulay, argued very truly that the value of a Legislature ought not to be estimated by the general prosperity of the country, but by the way in which its own proper work of legislation was done; and that, judged by that standard, the unreformed Parliament deserved the severest condemnation, the civil and criminal laws of England being as much a disgrace to her rulers as her material prosperity was a glory to the people.[2] And Brougham, also in law a pupil of Bentham, speaking for the Whig Ministry, declares that they "seek the support" of the middle classes, "by salutary reforms not merely in the representation, but in all the branches of our

[1] Canning, *Speeches*, vol. iv., pp. 354–56.
[2] *Miscellaneous Writings and Speeches*, ii., 408.

financial, our commercial, and our legal polity."[1]

The real chief of the fallen Ministry, now Sir Robert Peel, had indeed signalised his tenure of office by some modification of the sanguinary penal statutes denounced by Macaulay, and had greatly added to public security by the creation of an efficient police. But a truly representative Parliament would have dealt with the penal laws much sooner and much more thoroughly; and the new constabulary would have been more popular had they not been identified with the machinery of aristocratic oppression. There are not many sadder things in English history than that Peel, himself sprung from the middle class, and, like Pitt and Canning, born to guide it on the path of progress, should have been separated by fate from his natural supporters, and made illustrious by deserting the positions he had been retained to defend.

The place left vacant by the collapse of Wellington's forlorn Administration was filled, in fact if not in name, by a Coalition Cabinet, a combination of Whigs and Canningites under the lead of Fox's most dignified follower, Earl Grey. Although chosen to carry out the will of the middle class, it was exceptionally aristocratic in constitution. Its only middle-class member, and also by far the ablest, Brougham, sat in the House of Lords as Chancellor. The majority of his colleagues were hereditary peers, and the Ministers who sat in the Commons were mostly lords or the sons of lords.

[1] *Speeches*, ii. 601.

Their views on Reform differed widely, but the most aristocratic were not the least advanced. The scheme ultimately agreed on was a compromise based on the principle of making the smallest change in existing institutions consistent with the nearly complete admission of the middle class to political power. For innovating purposes a more sweeping measure might have proved less effectual. It seems unlikely that Household Suffrage, vote by ballot, shorter Parliaments, or even a closer adjustment of representation to population, would have made the transfer of sovereignty more absolute ; a considerable enfranchisement of working men might even have weakened the people by dividing them against themselves and limiting their choice to candidates rich enough to contest very large constituencies. Lord Grey assured the King that his Bill was really aristocratic ; and it was so in the sense of leaving the highest class a practical monopoly of administrative power ; but in all probability any manipulation of the electorate would have had the same effect. What it did do was to institute popular sovereignty (in Austin's sense), and to destroy the power of the Crown ; but the Prime Minister, as a theoretical Republican, would view this revolution without alarm.

The first Reform Bill passed the second reading by a majority of only one, and was wrecked by an amendment in Committee. An immediate dissolution gave the country, imperfectly represented as it was, the opportunity for an unequivocal expression of its opinion. Of eighty-two English county members seventy-six were returned pledged to support the Bill, as were also all the representatives

of the cities and the great towns. In the new House the second reading of the second Reform Bill passed by a majority of 136. The Lords threw it out by a majority composed of Bishops and of peers created since the French Revolution. Riots occurred in various parts of the country, and there was some talk of refusing to pay taxes. Wellington and Peel had yielded Catholic Emancipation to avoid civil war in Ireland; yet they countenanced a policy of resistance to the will of the people in England at the risk of the same calamity, and with the certainty of ultimate failure. When the Bill passed the Commons a second time—on this occasion by a majority of two to one—Peel still advised the Lords to throw it out, his avowed object being to discourage future attempts in the same direction, by making the innovator's task as difficult and repulsive as possible.[1] This time, however, they agreed to the second reading, but soon afterwards passed a wrecking amendment in Committee. On the King's refusal to overcome their resistance by a sweeping creation of peers, the Whig Ministers resigned, and Wellington accepted office on the understanding that he was to introduce a new measure of Reform on rather more moderate lines; but Peel, whose co-operation he invited, would not be a party to any such disreputable scheme for saving the dignity of the King and the Upper House. The two chiefs had different and conflicting standards of honour. The Duke, after declaring against any sort of constitutional change as bad in itself, was ready to pocket

[1] Parker, *Sir Robert Peel,* vol. ii., p. 201.

his principles for the convenience of his royal master; Sir Robert, as a party leader, objected to making himself and his followers responsible for a disturbance in existing arrangements which they had publicly denounced as inexpedient and unjust.

The advanced Liberal leaders were confident that, if it came to a trial of strength, the people would win, as they had won in Paris and Brussels. But they dreaded the consequences of victory. It would mean the establishment of pure democracy, for which, in their opinion, the country was not ripe. At this juncture Francis Place, a Radical tailor of high organising ability, and, for practical purposes, the wire-puller of the Benthamite party, hit on an effective scheme for baffling the Court intrigues by which William IV., under the influence, as was believed, of his German consort, had been won away from the popular cause. On Sunday, May 13th, 1832, he placarded the walls of London with bills containing merely the words: "To stop the Duke, go for gold." The result was a run on the Bank which lasted a week. But long before the week was over the placards had done their work; for on Tuesday the King had sent for Earl Grey, and on Friday permission had been obtained to create as many peers as were necessary to pass the Bill. The threat sufficed to bring the Lords to their senses, and on June 4th the third reading was carried by 106 to 22.[1]

In one important respect the measure that became law differed from the original plan. The county

[1] Graham Wallas, *Life of Francis Place*, pp. 305–10.

franchise, which in the first Bill had been restricted to forty-shilling freeholders, was extended, against the will of the Government, to copyholders, leaseholders, and tenants-at-will paying £50 a year. This change introduced a class of voters very much under the influence of the landowners; and, as the number of county members was simultaneously increased from 94 to 159, the landed interest obtained a great accession of strength, just at a time when the total abolition of the Corn Laws had become a leading item in the Radical programme.

Events soon showed that the Reform Bill had done precisely what was expected from it by friends and foes alike. A legislative machine had been created capable of carrying the will of the middle classes into effect. Twenty years of Parliamentary agitation had been needed to destroy such an indefensible iniquity as the slave trade. In the very first session of the Reformed Parliament West Indian slavery, a less unquestionable evil, was abolished without resistance. The work of law reform was greatly accelerated. Those sanguinary penal statutes mentioned by Macaulay as an accompaniment of the rotten-borough system were rapidly repealed; and "since 1838 no person has been hanged in England for any offence other than murder."[1] After clearing off all the arrears of Chancery business in his first year of office, Brougham proceeded to the work of reforming the civil law on Benthamite principles. He created the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council; he

[1] Walpole, *History of England,* vol. iv., p. 405.

created the Central Criminal Court; he took the first step towards the creation of County Courts; by abolishing fines and recoveries he greatly simplified conveyances; his Bankruptcy Bill became the germ of future legislation on the subject. Codification, on which Bentham and Austin laid so much stress, has unfortunately not yet been applied to English law.

India, as a despotically governed dependency, presented a freer field than England for the introduction of modern ideas. One of the demands of the new democracy had been that the trade monopoly of the East India Company should be put an end to. The privilege was taken from them in framing the new Charter of 1833. That instrument completed what the philosophic statesmen of the eighteenth century had begun—the transformation of the Company into a delegated agency for advancing the greatest happiness of the greatest number in a region where the co-efficient of possible felicity rose to hundreds of millions. The era of beneficent activity had, indeed, already begun. In 1827 Canning sent out as Governor-General of Bengal Lord William Bentinck, the son of a great Whig noble, and himself half a Radical. This illustrious humanitarian abolished flogging in the native Indian army, and put down Suttee, or the religious custom of burning widows alive, with as little scruple as he put down Thuggee, or the religious custom of strangling people in general. What was more, he instituted the system of admitting educated Hindoos to posts in the judicature—a most important step, not only as opening to them an honourable career, but also as making a

provision for public order without a ruinous addition to the financial burdens of India. During Wellington's Ministry it was more than once proposed to recall the reforming Governor, but Earl Grey's advent to power finally secured his position. Two years afterwards the Act that converted the Company into a purely political body made him the first Governor-General of all India; and for several months before resigning he enjoyed the assistance of an enthusiastic admirer in the person of Macaulay, who, after eloquently defending the new system of government as Secretary of the Board of Control, had been sent out to India as a member of the Supreme Council.

Macaulay himself thoroughly reformed the higher Hindoo education by substituting the study of English for the study of Oriental literature; and he gave India a Penal Code constructed on Benthamite principles, which a high authority, Fitzjames Stephen, prefers to the codes of France and Germany, and even regards as his most lasting monument. It did not, however, come into force until some years after the Mutiny—that is to say, after the clumsy system of a dual government had been abolished.

In order that utilitarian principles might be applied to the benefit of India, it was necessary that European methods of order and progress should be put into action through the whole peninsula, with no more regard for Asiatic prejudices than prudent policy required. A different rule was required for the good government of Colonies peopled by settlers of English or European race.

Experience has shown that these had better be left to manage their own affairs, without interference from the mother country, though not without such a measure of protection as their exposed position may necessitate, and such a community of citizenship as interest and affection may demand. A crisis in Canada, brought on by a long and complicated series of events not necessary to relate here, gave the English reformers an opportunity to declare that our relations with the Colonies should henceforth be conducted on rational principles. In Upper Canada a struggle between a jobbing oligarchy and the bulk of the Colonists, in Lower Canada a struggle between the old French and the new English settlers—aggravated, both of them, by the mismanagement of the Home Government—had led to insurrection and civil war. At length, in 1838, Lord Durham was sent out to compose the strife. He was Earl Grey's son-in-law, and the most advanced member of the Reform Cabinet. Many looked on him as the future leader of the progressive party in England. But his hasty and imperious temper made him an unsafe friend and a safe mark for foes. As Canadian Governor-General his policy was so fiercely assailed and so feebly supported at home that in a few months Durham felt compelled to resign. But the work for which he went out was already in principle accomplished. The celebrated Report issued under his name, which has guided the policy of all his successors, owes its origin to Benthamite inspiration. "I," says John Stuart Mill, the intellectual head of the school, "had been the prompter of his prompters. Lord Durham's report, written by Charles Buller,

partly under the inspiration of Wakefield, began a new era; its recommendations, extending to complete internal self-government, were in full operation in Canada within two or three years, and have since extended to nearly all the other Colonies of European race which have any claim to the character of important communities. And I may say that, in upholding the reputation of Lord Durham at the most important moment, I contributed materially to this result."[1]

It is to be noticed that the personality of William IV. placed a serious obstacle in the way of Canadian reconstitution, and that the acceptance of Durham's report was probably not unconnected with the advent to the throne of his successor, a young Queen whose indifference to politics facilitated the assumption of undivided sovereignty by middle-class opinion.

Thus, alike at the centre and at the extremities of the Empire, the tendency of the English Revolution was to substitute order for chaos, progress for corruption, and, to some extent, government by consent for government by constraint. Less brilliant and impressive than the changes so far passed in review, but perhaps even more intimately related to the future reorganisation of social life, was the municipal reform effected in 1835. Till then the borough corporations had been squalid little close oligarchies, worked in the interest of their patrons, Whig or Tory, and rewarded by the conversion of the public property under their control

[1] Mill, *Autobiography*, pp. 216–17.

into sources of private emolument. A Bill, transferring the management of the boroughs from these privileged individuals to the bulk of the ratepayers, was denounced by the extreme Conservatives as an invasion of the rights of property—the favourite metaphysical figment on that side, as the rights of man had been on the opposite side forty years before, and with less reason at the bottom of it. But Peel, who was assuming more and more the part of a middle-class leader, supported the Bill in the Commons; and, when the Lords returned it amended out of recognition, he stood by the Government in restoring the original outlines of their scheme.

So far we have been concerned almost solely with the reorganisation of government. We have now to consider how the new powers thus acquired were used for the common good.

First in importance comes the new Poor Law of 1834. It has been related in a former chapter how, under Pitt's rule, an unlimited extension was given to outdoor relief, and how this measure had contributed, with other causes, to stimulate the economical speculations of Malthus. His ideas were accepted by the Benthamites, whose opposition to indiscriminate alms-giving placed them on this point in sharp antagonism to the more impulsive Radicalism represented by Cobbett, as well as to those Tories who, partly from genuine philanthropy, partly from dislike of the manufacturers, wished to protect labour against the tyranny of capital. On the other hand, they had the full support of the leading Whigs, among whom, indeed, Malthus

himself may be reckoned. But the facts of the case spoke louder than any political partisan. A Commission, appointed to investigate the working of the Poor Law in 1832, reported in 1834. It showed —to borrow Brougham's energetic language—that those laws "had succeeded in wholly disconnecting the ideas of labour and its reward in the minds of the people; they had encouraged the idle and the profligate, at the expense of the honest and industrious; they had destroyed the independence of the peasant, and given him the degradation of a beggar"—with the assurance, which a beggar had not, of receiving alms whenever he chose to demand them.[1]

In one place a young man, the type of many more, was found saying: "I do not want work; I would rather have my 3s. 6d. from the parish without working than toil to get 10s. or 12s. a week." And, as the orator added, such young men in all probability supplemented the parish allowance with the profits of crime. Nor was the demoralisation limited "to inland places and to lazy rustics." The Kentish sailors, once renowned for their adventurousness and daring, would no longer put out to sea in winter, provided as they then were by the parish with 12s. a week.[2] The evil tended to perpetuate and aggravate itself by the contagion of example and by stimulating the growth of population. For every additional child the parish gave an additional allowance of 2s. a week; and as illegitimate children came in for the same privilege, a direct premium was put on

[1] Brougham, *Speeches,* vol. iii., pp. 488–89.
[2] Brougham, *op. cit.,* p. 495.

unchastity, the mother of a large family of bastards being eagerly sought after in marriage. Thus the burden increased more rapidly than the backs on which it was borne. The weight of pauper expenditure, in proportion to the population, at the two periods, was as seven in 1831 to four in 1801.[1]

To complete the stringent logic of the verification given to economic principle by this vast economic experiment, a negative instance was forthcoming. Over the whole of Scotland, where a different system of administering relief prevailed, no such evils existed; and in some favoured English districts, where a more rational administration had been adopted, industry flourished, and the poor-rate came down, first to one-half, and afterwards to one-third.[2]

A system securing a pension to every man at any age on demand might have been expected to raise the rate of wages by making the labourer independent of his employer. It had the contrary effect. As doles in aid of wages were allowed, the labourers accepted less than the cost of living would otherwise have compelled them to demand, with the result of shifting the burden of their maintenance on the ratepayers who did not profit by their work.

An end was put to these ruinous abuses by the Poor Law of 1834. It provided that henceforth outdoor relief should only be given to the sick and aged. Able-bodied paupers were only supported at the public expense in buildings where they were

[1] Porter, *Progress of the Nation*, vol. i., p. 84.
[2] Brougham, *op. cit.*, p. 502.

set to do unpleasant work on food sufficient to support life, but studiously kept under the mark of what a labourer in receipt of moderate wages could command. Existence in these workhouses was not agreeable, nor was it intended to be so; but their popular nickname of New Bastilles (pronounced Bastyles) was singularly ill-chosen. The old Bastille was a place where persons of the higher classes were detained, against their will, in idleness and relative luxury during the King's pleasure, with permission for married couples to live together; whereas nobody need enter a workhouse or remain there for any time against his will; and one of the rules most objected to was that a strict separation of the sexes prevented the breeding of hereditary paupers.

Another merit of the new law was that it created an administrative machinery, placing the raising and distribution of parish relief under the control of Boards elected by the ratepayers, supervised themselves by a central office in London.

The new Poor Law was angrily denounced by Cobbett, and by John Walter, a moderate Liberal, in the *Times;* but it passed both Houses by large majorities, Wellington, who loved superlatives, declaring it to be "the best Bill ever devised." Its real author was one of the Commissioners, Edwin Chadwick, an intimate friend and disciple of Bentham. Chadwick also took a leading though unseen part in another work of constructive legislation, the whole credit of which has fallen to others. This was the Factory Act of 1833.

It has been shown in a former chapter how the

old English Constitution, with its fortuitous system of checks and balances, by preventing the formation of a strong government, left powerful individuals and interests free to exercise grinding oppression on the most helpless members of the community, and how the most pitiful and unpitied among these unfortunates were the little children worked to death by factory labour. The reforming movement, genuine though feeble, of the early nineteenth century did something to ameliorate their lot. A pestilence caused by the insanitary condition of the Manchester factories, where child-apprentices were employed, led to an Act reducing their hours of work to twelve a day (1802). As an unintended result the atrocious apprenticeship system was discontinued, but only to be succeeded by the direct purchase of children from their own parents for the same exhausting toil. The Act of 1802 did not apply to this new category of infant slaves, who were treated almost as brutally as their orphan predecessors.[1] Sir Robert Peel, the great statesman's father, introduced another Bill in 1816, limiting all child-labour in factories to ten hours a day, and in this form it passed the Commons ; but the Lords raised the time to twelve hours, and restricted the measure to cotton mills. After all, the number of hours and the description of labour mattered little if, as we are told, the law remained a dead letter.

So matters stood until the reforming era of 1830, when a great agitation on the subject of child-labour and overwork in general sprang up, headed by representatives of all parties in the country. It was

[1] H. de B. Gibbins, *Industrial History*, p. 391.

not originally excited by any feeling of jealousy on the side of the landed interest against the manufacturers. On the contrary, the first public protest was raised in the manufacturing districts themselves. It came from the pen of Richard Oastler, who, though steward of a landed estate, had lived for many years in the heart of the factory districts, and was supplied with his facts by J. Wood, a Bradford manufacturer. Michael Sadler, an eloquent advocate of the poor, was induced by his representations to bring the subject before Parliament. Sadler was in the linen trade, and, like Oastler, a high Tory; but the first Bill for putting an end to child-labour and restricting the labour of boys and girls under eighteen to ten hours a day, was introduced by Hobhouse, a Radical, and Lord Morpeth, a Ministerial Whig. Neither is it true that political economists, as such, were opposed to legislative interference with the employment of children in factories. Malthus refers to it with approval,[2] and it subsequently received the support of McCulloch.

Sadler had no seat in the reformed Parliament, and the initiative passed from his hands to the abler guidance of Lord Ashley, so famous in the annals of philanthropy under his later title of Lord Shaftesbury. He was inspired by a deep religious feeling of the Evangelical cast, as also were Oastler and Sadler. But among those who deprecated hasty legislation were some whose love of humanity did not yield to theirs. Lord Althorp, the Whig leader of the House of Commons, rightly insisted

[2] *Essay on Population*, p. 421. Hodder, *Life of Lord Shaftesbury*, vol. i., p. 157.

on a Parliamentary inquiry into the facts of the case, and a Commission was appointed for the purpose. One of the Commissioners was Edwin Chadwick, the Benthamite. He, we are told, "was the chief author of the Report which recommended the appointment of Government inspectors under a central authority, and the limitation of children's work to six hours daily.[1].....Among other proposals in the Report was one that employers should be held responsible for accidents to their work-people—a suggestion that has only been carried into effect by the Employers' Liability Act (1898)." It may be said that this proposal, as being no more than a new provision for the redressal of injuries, still remains within the limits of that individualism with which Benthamism is commonly identified. But no interpretation of individualism will cover Chadwick's recommendation, made before a Committee of the House of Commons in 1837, that the traffic in spirituous liquors should be restricted, and that healthy recreation for the people should be provided.[2]

Bentham's school was, in truth, pledged to nothing but the reorganisation of individual and social life on a basis of pure reason, with the greatest possible increase of happiness for its end. As the proximate means to that end the identification of private with public interest was prescribed; and again, as a means to that secondary end, the transfer of political power from the aristocracy to

[1] By the Bill actually passed in 1833 children under nine were forbidden to work at all, the labour of children under thirteen was limited to eight hours a day, and the labour of young persons under eighteen to sixty-nine hours a week.

[2] *Dictionary of National Biography,* Supplement, vol. i., p. 407.

the people. To what extent the compulsion implied in every exercise of power should be carried remained a question not of principle but of detail. A good deal of reforming activity was directed towards the removal of restrictions on the open expression of opinion, on locomotion, on trade, on colonial autonomy, on the independence of foreign nations, on the personal liberty of negroes, or, again, towards the removal of disabilities connected with religious belief; and the association of Liberalism with the systematic struggle for universal emancipation led to its occasional identification, in the minds both of Liberals and Conservatives, with a rooted hostility to all restrictions on liberty as such. The nature-worship of the eighteenth century, continued far into the nineteenth, gave a sort of religious sanction to this feeling. But the Benthamites, at any rate, were inaccessible to such illusions. They no more believed in nature as a lawgiver than they believed in the Pentateuch ; and, however much they may have regarded individual interest as a safe guide for the economic man, they held that man, as a lawyer and legislator, was in most instances set against the general interest by exclusive attention to his own advantage, and that this divergence would continue until the two were brought into coincidence by a new system of government and education—a theory borrowed, consciously or not, from the idealistic philosophy of Plato. And even their political economy embodied one very important exception to the general principle of letting things alone. For they fully accepted Malthus's theory of population, according to which the mass

of mankind could only be rescued from abject poverty by habitual disobedience to the most imperious of natural instincts.

The new Poor Law was in the first instance a triumph for the principle of *laissez-faire* by withdrawing the artificial encouragement previously given to the idle and improvident as well as to the multiplication of their numbers. But it also brought up the question whether, besides withdrawing bounties, artificial checks should not be imposed on the growth of population; and still wider issues were opened by the Report of the Commission on factory labour. It was no derogation from the principle of free contract that children should not be sold into slavery and worked to death; but to interfere with the contracts between their parents and the manufacturers involved the assumption of new responsibilities on the part of the State, going far beyond the mere duty of maintaining order.

Nor could the question be long argued on grounds of mere abstract metaphysical right. As a result of child-labour the population of the manufacturing districts was found to be fast degenerating; and this alone seemed to justify restrictive legislation, for any theory that forbids the State to protect the health of its citizens stands self-condemned. But if so, then the insanitary employment of women, the future mothers of the race, likewise called for State intervention, as well as their employment in trades of a demoralising character. And this, again, suggested serious doubts whether they, any more than children, were capable of contracting freely for themselves. Finally, the labour of the various

classes of operatives employed in factories was so interdependent that the hours of one set could not be abridged without bringing the others to a standstill—a circumstance which would suggest the desirability of fixing a shorter legal day for men also, thus entailing a fresh inroad on the theory of *laissez-faire*. In social as well as in physical science the applicability of metaphysical conceptions broke down under the stress of fact.

Not that the rigid economists would allow the existence of any such discrepancy between fact and theory. They claimed that the violated law of *laissez-faire* would soon avenge itself in famine. Shorter hours meant diminished production—that is, a less amount of capital available for the payment of wages. The answer was that the produce of labour would increase with its efficiency, and that this depended on the health and strength of the operatives, which would gain by their working for shorter hours. As for the children, new machines were invented to do the work from which they had been debarred. And, apart from this expedient, recourse was had to the simple device of employing them in successive shifts, so that a child, though not the same child, was always available for the office required.

Edwin Chadwick, the real author of the Factory Commission Report, had no scruples about the State regulation of labour; and his recommendation that the children should be sent to school during the time saved off their work proves that he had none as regards compulsory education either. Compulsory or not, State education signally violates

the principle of *laissez-faire*. It is therefore noteworthy that the first proposal to establish a system of national State education was made in 1837 by Roebuck, at that time a Benthamite, and seconded by Grote, who remained a Benthamite through life. Roebuck advocated a purely secular system of teaching, and wished that the cost should be defrayed out of Church property. Government took the question out of his hands, and provisionally settled it by granting £30,000 in aid of the National Society and the British and Foreign School Society. It will be remembered that these societies grew out of the systems of Bell and Lancaster respectively, one being supported by Church people and the other by Nonconformists. As the amount allotted to each body was proportioned to the local contributions it received from private sources, and as the National Society was much the richer of the two, the Ministerial plan amounted to a fresh endowment of the Church of England at the expense of the people.

Lord Brougham, as a Scotchman, was an enthusiast for education, and had more definite ideas about it than any of his party. He observed that under the voluntary system school attendance in England had more than doubled in fifteen years; and he feared that the State might do more harm than good by taking the movement out of the hands of private enterprise. But he could not conceal from himself the fact that the supply of education given fell far short of the demand, and was even more deficient in quality than in quantity. As a Scotchman, again, he was more open to French influence than his English contemporaries.

Deeply impressed by the success of the Normal schools in France, he proposed that similar institutions for the training of teachers should be established among ourselves. The cost would be trifling and the benefit immense. He also proposed to organise a system for the administration of the funds, whether charitable or public, available for educational purposes, consisting of elected committees all over the country under the direction of a Central Board in London.

When Brougham made these proposals he had ceased to be a member of the Government; but his scheme was adopted by Lord John Russell in 1839, with the omission, however, of the elected committees. Even so, the clergy were infuriated at the prospect of losing their ascendancy, and in the face of their opposition the proposal for a Normal school had to be withdrawn; while the proposal to place all the assisted schools under the inspection of emissaries from a Committee of the Privy Council could only be saved by subjecting them and their reports to the approval of the Bishops.

The failure of the middle-class Parliament and its elected agents to cope adequately with the educational question shows out more conspicuously by contrast with their energy and courage elsewhere. At this very time they were reforming the postal system by introducing a low uniform charge for the delivery of stamped letters all over the kingdom on a uniformly graduated scale of weights, at the same time abolishing the privilege, enjoyed by some among the rich, of sending their letters free. The

difference was that this and the other great reforms effected in previous years, or to be effected not long afterwards, were either accepted without distinction of party or were carried against party opposition by the overwhelming pressure of public opinion which the new representative system brought to bear directly on the rulers of the people, while giving them power to execute its will. Popular education, on the other hand, though usually demanded by democracies, was not pressed on the governing classes with any such unanimity, because it had become so associated with religion as to be fatally hampered by the religious anarchy of England. Nonconformity had contributed to the growth of English individualism, and so far must be credited with its share of whatever benefits we owe to that tendency ; but it is also responsible to the same extent for that paralysis of the Government which made it nearly useless as an instrument either of order or of progress. Moreover, by the stimulus of opposition it had made the Church more sectarian ; while by breeding religious rivalry it had stimulated those particular religious beliefs which are most unfavourable to the growth of science and reason.

Nonconformity has always found its strongest political basis in the middle class, and therefore its importance was greatly enhanced by the revolution which made that class supreme in the State. Advantage was taken of the change to procure the removal of some grievances under which Dissenters still suffered. They received permission to marry in their own chapels, or without any religious ceremony whatever at the registrar's office. In 1836, against the protests of Oxford and Cambridge, a Royal

Charter incorporated the University of London, enabling it to give degrees without the acceptance of any religious test or the passing of any religious examination. A Bill to abolish religious tests in the two ancient universities had passed the Commons by a large majority two years before, but had been rejected by the Lords.

Another grievance of the Nonconformists, payment of Church rates (that is, being taxed to support places of worship which they did not use, and often did not approve of), was left without a remedy by the reformed Parliament. The Whig Ministers proposed to throw the expense of keeping up Church buildings on Church property, but could not overcome the resistance excited by this most equitable arrangement.

In proportion to their grievances Irish Roman Catholics were much worse treated than English Protestant Dissenters by the English middle-class Sovereign. An alien Church, numbering but a small fraction of the Irish people among its members, was established in their midst, and supported by the labour of a peasantry who for the most part detested it, spent on lands originally devoted to the maintenance of their own clergy. Its revenues were levied under the form of tithes; and payment of them under that form, the most noxious conceivable, was resisted with every circumstance of outrage on the collectors by the aggrieved cultivators of the soil. These poor people were told with stupid pedantry that if tithes were abolished their rent would be raised to an equivalent amount, and that the money would go

into the pockets of Protestant landlords. Nothing could be truer; but it remained equally true that if this revenue, either under the name of tithes or of rent-charge, were handed back to its original owners, the Catholic parishioners who now had to support them would henceforth be relieved from that heavy expense. If, on the other hand, it were considered inexpedient to re-endow the Roman priesthood, there was the alternative, since adopted, of secularising Church property, and devoting it in other ways to the relief or improvement of the poorer classes. Finally, there was the plan of commuting tithes into a rent-charge to be used for the payment of the clergy of the Established Church.

The last-named course was ultimately adopted by agreement between the two great political parties in 1838. The reason why it was delayed till then is so characteristic of English public opinion at the time that a reference to it will be instructive.

One of the earliest measures proposed by Lord Grey's Ministry in the Reformed Parliament dealt with the temporalities of the Irish Church. It proposed, very reasonably, that two of the four Archbishoprics and ten of the twenty-two Bishoprics then existing should be suppressed; that the Bishops' lands should be vested in ecclesiastical commissioners, who were expected to make more out of them than their existing holders; that the stipends assigned to future Bishops should be considerably less than the incomes received by the present Bishops; and that the surplus revenues, if any, thus obtained should be devoted to secular uses.

This last provision, known as the Appropriation

Clause, encountered such violent opposition, even among the Whigs, that it was provisionally withdrawn, and the Bill passed both Houses without any other material alteration. Next year Lord John Russell revived the Appropriation Clause. Subsequently accepted more than once as part of an Irish Tithes Bill by the Commons, it was rejected on each occasion by the Lords, and finally abandoned by its authors. The leading Whigs were in advance of their age, but their liberality only served to drive some of their ablest men into the Tory ranks, and to prolong Irish discord by postponing the commutation of tithes.

"All the wise men were for Catholic Emancipation," said Lord Melbourne, "and all the fools against it—and the fools were right." If the fools were right, it was not for the right reason. What they anticipated did not come to pass. The Roman Catholic members have not used their Parliamentary position as an instrument for the destruction of Protestantism and religious liberty in England. But the wise were mistaken in thinking that Irish discontent would be appeased by a single instalment of justice. While grievances remained agitation was bound to continue, especially as, thanks to the fools, the long delay of emancipation had taught the Irish people and their great leader, O'Connell, how much could be effected by its systematic employment against rulers who yielded to violence what they would not yield to reason. Resistance to the exaction of tithes was met by a Coercion Bill substituting martial law for the ordinary processes of justice in the disturbed districts, and placing the right of meeting every-

where at the mercy of the Lord Lieutenant. It was carried with a facility offering a remarkable contrast to the difficulty of getting any sort of remedial measure through, and to the impossibility of passing the Appropriation Clause. Such proceedings very naturally confirmed O'Connell in his belief that the Irish had better be left to manage their own affairs in their own way; but his demand for the Repeal of the Union had no immediate effect beyond exciting a bitter feeling of hostility against England among the Catholic Irish, and increasing the discredit of the Whigs, obliged as they were to accept the Parliamentary support of the great orator who habitually referred to them in terms of calculated scorn and hatred.

O'Connell privately complained that the Liberals were infidels, which, according to him, alienated from them the sympathies of the Irish people. This was very ungrateful on his part, for had the Liberals inherited the religious convictions of their political ancestors, the English Puritans, they certainly would not have supported Catholic Emancipation, nor proposed the secularisation of Irish Church property. What delayed Emancipation so long was the religious bigotry of the English middle class; what enabled the Lords to reject the Appropriation Clause time after time was the knowledge that it excited no enthusiasm among the new electorate. We shall see hereafter that the much more sweeping secularisation carried thirty years later was only made possible by the weakening of religious animosities due to the spread of rationalism in the meanwhile.

A great instrument of enlightened legislation

had been created and used with brilliant success for realising ideas hitherto debated only within the schools of thought. But the men who wielded it could give neither education to England nor peace to Ireland, because they found themselves confronted by a force which served as a rallying-point for all the enemies of progress, and against which Bentham had flung himself three times in vain—the force of organised pietism, seeking to secure the greatest happiness of the greatest number in a world that is not ours.

Up to a comparatively recent period any Government that excited the hostility of the Church of England has been doomed to destruction. Both the Commonwealth and the Stuart monarchy had that misfortune, and both fell almost without a struggle. Even the genius of Marlborough could not uphold his friends when they dared to touch a parson. What overthrew the younger Pitt, and so long debarred the Whigs from power, was really the Church, acting through the stubborn will of George III. and the vacillating will of his successor. Wellington's fall was the Church's revenge for Emancipation; and now the Reform Whigs found themselves unequally matched against the same relentless foe. Russell's revival of the Appropriation Clause drove four of his colleagues into the Conservative ranks, Stanley, afterwards thrice Prime Minister, and Sir James Graham, an administrator of exceptional ability, being among the number. Their loss was soon followed by the retirement of Earl Grey. For want of a better chief, the incompetent Lord Melbourne had to be

put in his place. Nature had meant Melbourne for a scholarly mystic,[1] as she meant Lord Althorp, who led the House of Commons under him, for a grazier. When the death of his father, Earl Spencer, removed Althorp from that uncongenial position, the Ministry fell to pieces. The King, who sided warmly with the Church against Russell, if he did not actually drive them from office, at any rate claimed and received full credit for having done so. On Melbourne's resignation he sent for Peel, who at once dissolved Parliament. The Tories, who had counted no more than 150 in the first reformed House of Commons, won an immense number of seats, and probably would have won a majority had not the people resented the King's interference. A series of defeats in the new House compelled Peel to resign, and William IV. had to undergo the humiliation of recalling Melbourne to office. Parliamentary reform had given a mortal blow to the power of the Crown; but in its last agonies it exercised its old effect of weakening the real Sovereign. As a penalty for accepting its support, Peel, the true middle-class Minister and destined future chief, was condemned to six years more of opposition. The delay would have been shorter had not an untoward combination of circumstances allowed the royal influence to exert itself once more.

In 1837 the young Princess Victoria succeeded to the throne, and her accession was followed, in accordance with a rule since altered, by a dissolution of Parliament. The Whigs were rather

[1] See his character in Bulwer Lytton's *St. Stephen's.*

stronger in the new House than in the old; but the respite did not last long, and, after two years of weak government, Melbourne again resigned. Peel was again sent for, but made it a condition of accepting office that the great Whig ladies of the royal household should be replaced by attendants more in the confidence of his party. The young Queen, whose instincts were autocratic, showed on this occasion the temper of an Elizabeth, and declared that she would not give up her old friends. Parties were so nicely balanced that her will decided the question, and the Whigs came back, but thoroughly discredited, and with a position hardly better than caretakers for Peel and his Conservative followers. Appealing to the country from a vote of no confidence, and taking up at the last moment an insincere cry for cheap bread, they found themselves this time decisively beaten, and were condemned by a majority of ninety-one when the new Parliament met.

Chapter VII.

THE CHURCHES AND THE WORLD

While the events related in the last chapter were succeeding one another on the surface of history, a reactionary current had set in deeper down whose representatives were hardly more in sympathy with Sir Robert Peel than with his Whig and Radical opponents.

We saw how the Peace of 1814 was followed by a strong religious movement connected with the Methodist and Evangelical revivals of the previous century. So great, indeed, was the fascination exercised even on the intellectual classes that during the next twenty-five years young men of the highest and most varied ability were drawn to the Christian ministry in numbers such as had not been known since the Reformation; while even in the hands of laymen poetry and science received a distinctly religious impress, markedly contrasted with their treatment by the preceding generation. This religion had a strongly pietistic character; that is, it involved a constant reference to what was to come after death as infinitely more important than what was happening now, and a view of our present life as deriving its sole significance from the connection of what happened in it with what was to come after death. Among the more ignorant and excitable religionists, the study of what was supposed to be revealed in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures

stimulated still further their restless curiosity about a future state, and led to fantastic interpretations of ancient prophecies in the light of contemporary politics. Edward Irving, as we saw, owed his popularity to the address with which he put himself forward as the hierophant of such mysteries; and the original object of Keble's *Christian Year* was to appease the prevalent excitement by directing it towards more sober and profitable meditations.

If the millenarian visions of the religious revivalists were rooted in eighteenth-century pietism, they were no less intimately related to the revolutionary aspirations of the age. In the presence of absorbing social interests, the individual soul could no longer remain wrapped up in the contemplation of its own eternal destinies. Hence the prominence given to the social aspect of human immortality as a reign of the saints in the theology of the period. But the millennium itself had to be preceded and brought on by the conversion of the whole earth to true—*i.e.*, Protestant—Christianity, accompanied by the removal of whatever abuses still impeded that glorious consummation. Efforts in this direction demanded concert, union, organisation; and with the need of organisation came the need of a central authority. As the French Revolution had ended in the centralised despotism of Napoleon; as the Benthamite programme of reforms had substituted an undivided middle-class control for an incoherent oligarchy, and was enriching the administration with a number of new directing departments, so in various quarters efforts began to revive the idea of the Church, always an integral

element of Christianity, or rather to make it more of a reality than before.

We are accustomed to associate this idea in a rather exclusive way with the Tractarian Movement at Oxford; but the Oxford experiment was only one of a number, enjoying a unique success because it was worked on the basis of a solid existing institution. Irving founded a Church on the model of what he conceived the Apostolic community of Jerusalem to have been. His friend Coleridge, starting from the opposite pole of speculation, constructed the idea of a Church as a body holding in trust national property to be expended in promoting the interests of progressive civilisation. Such a Church need not be identified with any form of theological teaching; although, in the case of the Anglican establishment, the traditional dogmas, interpreted in the light of his own philosophy, might be allowed to live on as the centre of a vast system of culture. Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, who was in some ways a Coleridgean, meditated comprehensive schemes for uniting Churchmen and Dissenters in the same establishment, and English and Prussian Protestants in the same communion. James Mill, going further than Coleridge, proposed turning the endowed clergy from preachers of divinity into teachers of morality. Maurice, a Unitarian converted to liberal orthodoxy, and the most philosophical of all the young men that the religious movement had swept into Anglican orders, loved to exhibit Christianity on its social side as the Kingdom of Christ. Whately, the great Whig Archbishop of Dublin, strove for years to keep up a joint system of popular education

in Ireland, based on as much Christianity as could be taught in common to Catholic and Protestant children.

Among more conservative clerics the need of a stronger ecclesiastical organisation made itself primarily felt as a reaction against the rising rationalism of the age. What they called German neology—that is, scientific Biblical criticism—had begun to make its way from Hanover to England before communication between King George's insular and continental dominions had been cut by the war, and with the renewal of intercourse after the Peace the current had again set in. Rose, a High Church Cambridge theologian, sounded the alarm in a published course of lectures (1828) enumerating all the points on which German University professors had presumed to shake the faith of their classes in Scriptural infallibility. According to him, this lamentable heterodoxy was due to the abandonment of Episcopacy by German Protestantism. At Oxford, where nothing was then known of modern criticism, the triumph of Liberalism in English politics at first excited most indignation, and Peel lost his seat for the University by conceding the Catholic claims. Academic intolerance found an unexpected mouthpiece in Keble, the poet of the *Christian Year,* who had acquired great authority by his hymnology, by his learning, and by his saintly character. Chosen to preach the Assize Sermon at Oxford on July 14th, 1833, he took the opportunity of making a violent attack on what he called National Apostasy. Without actually naming the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts and Catholic Emancipation,

while admitting even that such measures might be justified on grounds of political expediency, the preacher vehemently protested against the exultation with which such lamentable necessities had been hailed as in themselves a good thing. But there were worse signs of the times than even such deluded self-congratulations. There was a general tendency to look on a difference of religious opinion as of no account in the daily business of life, to repose public confidence in the heretic or infidel, and even to make a friend of him in private as readily as if he were an orthodox believer. There was also a culpable indifference to the authority of the clergy in matters of religion. Yet the Old Testament—which Keble treats throughout as an infallible record and guide—teaches a very different lesson. It tells us that statesmen should humble themselves before the accredited ministers of religion, and bow to their decisions as to the oracles of God.

In the Preface accompanying his published Sermon Keble specifies the Irish Church Bill, suppressing certain Irish sees, as the occasion that more particularly called it forth, denouncing as impious the State's pretension to interfere with the internal economy of ecclesiastical institutions. In view of the possible disestablishment of the Church of England he and his friends fell back on the supernatural character which, according to them, distinguishes it from all other Protestant bodies, if indeed it could properly be called Protestant at all. Their claim rested on Apostolical succession, on the alleged historical fact that the power to teach revealed truth and to absolve from sin descended

by an unbroken chain of ordination from Christ and his Apostles. It was determined to issue a series of Tracts setting forth this claim, and appealing in the first instance to the clergy, whose mystical pretensions, if asserted with sufficient emphasis, would surely enable them to recover their ancient dignity and power.

Such was the origin of the Tractarian Movement. It quickly passed from Keble's guidance into the hands of a far superior leader, John Henry Newman, beyond dispute the greatest pulpit orator of the nineteenth century, and, in the opinion of many, its greatest prose writer also. A singularly magnetic personality enabled his literary gifts to tell for quite as much as they were worth, and secured for him the implicit obedience of other adherents to the Movement whose intellectual powers, as measured by logical ability and justness of thought, were superior to his own.

Newman had begun as an Evangelical; and the religious position he subsequently adopted may be more properly described as an enlargement of Evangelical principles than as a reaction against them. None of his associates was so strongly impressed by the growing rationalism of the age; indeed, his intellectual sympathies with it were so strong as to draw on him a wholly unmerited imputation of secret unbelief. And he considered that neither Evangelicalism nor, indeed, popular Protestantism in any form had a good logical case as against infidel attacks. Heartily accepting the Bible as an infallible authority, he held that it needed the warrant of an infallible Church to be

accepted, and that any argument against the Church applied equally to the Bible.

Pusey, who afterwards gave his name to the Movement, was not drawn into it until some time after the publication of the Tracts had begun. His views had indeed been at first more liberal than Keble's or Newman's. He knew German, had travelled in Germany, and resented Rose's onslaught on the German theologians, some of whom were his friends. A pamphlet of his, written in their defence, seemed even to indicate some serious reservations about the extent to which Biblical infallibility should be accepted as of faith. But the remonstrances of his High Church friends soon put an end to such doubts, and henceforth Pusey gave his unfaltering support to the literal accuracy of every statement in the Old Testament, no less than to the dogma of a never-ending hell, as integral elements of Christianity. As for Keble, he held that most of the men who felt difficulties about Scriptural inspiration were too wicked to be reasoned with.

Among Newman's younger followers the most conspicuous were Hurrell Froude and W. G. Ward. Froude was a Romanticist, who hated the Reformation, and felt more enthusiasm for the mediæval than for the primitive Church. He urged Newman further along the reactionary path, but died before the alternative between insular and Roman Catholicism could be fairly presented to his choice. Ward, before he came under Newman's influence, had been a Broad Churchman of the Arnoldian school. As a keen dialectician, he convinced himself that Arnold's principles logically led to complete unbelief. It was easier to prove that Tractarianism,

when pressed to its legitimate consequences, involved complete submission to Rome; and Ward lost no opportunity of reasoning the matter out with Newman.

The Reformation had begun as a revolt against priestly authority, and had ended, in Calvinism, with the reduction to a minimum of the sacramental and ritualistic systems by which that authority is chiefly maintained. The Tractarian reassertion of sacerdotalism naturally led to a reversal of the process, to a resumption of the practices and beliefs which Protestant England had condemned as unscriptural and superstitious. Such a proceeding was not indefensible. It so happened that the formularies of the Anglican Church had been carefully constructed so as to conciliate that considerable body of Catholics, amounting probably to a majority of the whole population, who had separated from the See of Rome solely because on no other terms could the national independence of England be preserved. Nor was this all. In clearing away alleged mediæval corruptions the English Church Reformers had not trusted to their unaided private judgment. They had appealed to primitive doctrine and practice as evinced by the Fathers and the first great Councils. Their interpretation was not infallible; it was open to correction or completion from the researches of later scholars. By a skilful use of such methods Newman concluded that an Anglican clergyman might, consistently with his ordination vows, hold something very like the whole cycle of Roman doctrine as formulated before the Council of Trent. His contention provoked a general outcry, which

brought the Tracts to an end; and the charge of dishonesty was freely flung at him and his party. It came with an ill grace from Low Churchmen who on some points were departing not less widely from the plain sense of the formularies in the direction of Calvinism than their opponents were departing from it in the direction of Rome.

After long hesitation, Newman and Ward extricated themselves from this disagreeable position by submitting to the Church which the patristic researches of the one and the peremptory dialectic of the other had convinced them was the sole refuge from that utter unbelief to which unaided human reason is condemned.

So ended the Tractarian Movement. Oxford resumed her interrupted studies, and the current of free criticism so dreaded by Newman returned in greater force than ever. The Tracts had failed to effect the original purpose of their chief author; they had not persuaded the English clergy as a body to claim a position of commanding authority on disputed questions of belief; nor in a Church constituted like theirs was the claim possible, for no such authority can exist without a supreme head to issue and enforce its decrees. Besides, the Bishops showed no inclination to assume new responsibilities, nor would the majority of the clergy have accepted their guidance had it been offered. Many individual curates were not slow to plume themselves on their restored dignity as successors of the Apostles, though in their hearts they felt much prouder of being classed as English gentlemen; and celibacy was the very last feature of Romanism they were disposed to imitate. Such

as they were, this disorganised band of Puseyites, as they now began to be called, after their sole remaining Oxford leader, found themselves far outnumbered by the Evangelicals, to whom Apostolical succession was at best but an antiquarian curiosity, while the doctrines and practices associated with it by the new High Churchmen were objects of fanatical hatred and terror. Intellectually, after Newman's secession, the lights of the party could not compare with such divines as Milman, Whately, Hare, Thirlwall, and Maurice, soon to be reinforced by Arthur Stanley, Charles Kingsley, Robertson of Brighton, and Benjamin Jowett. Some of these were more than suspected of doctrinal heresy; none were sacerdotalists; all cherished the connection between the Church of England and the new Liberal State.

The Movement had begun as a protest against the ecclesiastical policy of the reforming Whigs. Three years afterwards fresh and more direct provocation was given by Lord Melbourne's appointment of Dr. Hampden to be Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford. Hampden had been Bampton Lecturer in 1832, and had chosen the scholastic theology for his subject. The course he delivered was one long attack on the mediæval dogmatism that his dreaming contemporaries proposed to make the supreme law of belief. They now accused him of heretical views about the Trinity. His real offence probably consisted in throwing some doubt on the penal interpretation of the Atonement. Anyhow, a strong official protest against the appointment was got up, signed, it is said, by some who had not read the incriminated

lectures. Melbourne persisted in forcing his professor on the reluctant university authorities, who used their power to make Hampden's position as disagreeable as they could. Eleven years later Lord John Russell raised a fresh outcry by promoting him to the See of Hereford, carrying the appointment through against the protest of half the Episcopal Bench. Arnold, whose orthodoxy seemed more doubtful still, would probably have been made a Bishop if he had lived.

The logical course would have been for the High Churchmen to sever their connection with the State altogether. In Scotland this was the actual outcome of a somewhat similar movement. There the Evangelical revival took the form of a revolution in Church government. As religious zeal increased among the people, it was claimed that the congregations should be allowed, if they chose, to exercise a veto on the choice of their ministers. This was found to be inconsistent with the law as it stood, and every attempt to alter the law broke down. Finally, under the lead of the most distinguished living Scotch Churchman, the celebrated Dr. Chalmers, 474 ministers seceded from the Establishment, and set up a Free Church, supported by voluntary contributions.

But, although the Movement failed to accomplish the objects of those who first began it, their efforts were by no means thrown away. By provoking religious controversy they greatly raised the religious temperature of the upper and middle classes, thus contributing to that state of opinion which enabled the Lords to reject the Appropriation Clause and eventually drove the Whigs out of

office. And not only did the Church of England profit, like every other religious body, by this reinforcement of religious zeal, but it profited in a more special way by the reforming activity of the detested Liberal Government. During his brief tenure of office between Melbourne's first and second Administrations, Peel issued a Commission to ascertain what was the amount of the Church's revenues, and how they were distributed among her ministers. Its report brought to light the existence of scandalous abuses. Speaking broadly, the richest preferments fell to those who did the least work, or, in numerous instances, to those who did no work at all, while the hardest workers were the most miserably paid. Nearly half the beneficed clergy were non-resident, with the result that Dissenting chapels had nearly doubled in twenty-four years.[1] On the basis of this information Russell carried a series of measures putting an end to the most crying abuses, and establishing a less unequal proportion between the services rendered and the emoluments received.

Such legislation, excellent as it was, effectually blocked what would perhaps have been the more salutary course, recommended by the philosophical Radicals, of applying the surplus revenues of the Church to national education. Above all, by making the Church more popular it increased the power of the clergy to resist any comprehensive system of State education, which from the nature of things must have been unsectarian, like Lancaster's, or secular, like Bentham's.

[1] Walpole, *History of England*, vol. v., pp. 259-60.

Before clerical resistance to popular education could be even partially overruled, a new current of opinion operating against theological prejudice of every kind had to come into play. Two distinct forces, represented, however imperfectly, in Paine's *Age of Reason,* combined to swell its volume. There was the direct attack of rationalistic criticism on theological beliefs; and there was the indirect effect wrought by science in substituting the view of nature as an orderly, uninterrupted sequence of events, without any known beginning or end, for the supernaturalist view of the same events as emanating from a personal will, and subject at any moment to its interference for purposes best known to the guardians of accredited religious tradition, and occasionally disclosed by men and women believed to be in the confidence of that overruling will.

Many hold that democracy counts as a third force co-operating with criticism and science. But this seems to be a mistake, resting on incomplete historical studies or on accidental political experiences. A democracy where the people remain in ignorance is from the nature of the case rather favourable to the more simple and primitive beliefs of mankind, or, more generally, to whatever offers the greatest felicity at the cost of the smallest intellectual effort. Popular feeling may easily be excited against costly ecclesiastical establishments; but so also may the cupidity of a despot or an oligarchy; and, when pious benefactions have been given up to public plunder, the zeal that originated them returns, in default of diffused enlightenment, with equal facility under every form of government, and becomes the basis of fresh accumulations.

The rising influence of the people as such in English politics long remained associated with an increase of general bigotry; and it seems more than doubtful whether in the aristocratically organised Scottish society of the eighteenth century a sustentation fund of a million and a quarter could have been raised for the Free Church.

In fact, the transfer of power to a more extended section of the community registered by the Reform Act seems at first to have rather discouraged rationalistic criticism, and given a theological twist to scientific ideas. Thirlwall took orders two years after publishing his translation of Schleiermacher, nor did he make any other contribution to liberal theology. As tutor at Trinity College, Cambridge, he advocated the admission of Dissenters to the University, condemning also the collegiate lectures on divinity and compulsory attendance at chapel—pronouncements which led to the forfeiture of his academical position. After the outcry against his *History of the Jews,* Milman kept silence for ten years. In 1840, when the reaction seemed to be abating, he published a far bolder work, the *History of Christianity,* studiously minimising the miraculous element in the New Testament, and maximising the points of contact between the new revelation and the religious developments reached on various lines of unassisted heathen speculation. This time Milman's enemies were discreet enough not to advertise his heresies by such extreme vituperation as before; but their dangerous character was quietly pointed out, and the circulation of the book seems to have been effectually blocked. A little before its publication Charles Hennell, a

highly intelligent Unitarian layman, had handled the same subjects with much less learning, but with much greater freedom, in *An Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity,* giving, indeed, no satisfactory solution of the problem, but impugning the miraculous narratives of the Gospel with such effect as to convince George Eliot, then a girl of eighteen, that the Evangelical view of religion she had adopted was not true.

The wide popularisation of physical science in England dates from 1831, the year when the British Association was founded. Several among its prominent teachers — Chalmers, Sedgwick, Buckland, and Whewell, for example—were clergymen ; and Faraday, the greatest of them all, sometimes conducted the religious services of the little sect to which he belonged.

Apart from the gratification of their own devotional feelings there were ample pecuniary rewards for those who, in the poetical language of Tom Moore, made "Science the torch-bearer to Religion." A pious peer, Lord Bridgewater, bequeathed £8,000 to subsidise Natural Theology ; and his executors fulfilled his intentions by dividing the money among eight men of science, four of them clerics, each of whom was paid to produce a treatise bringing evidence from his own particular study to prove the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Creator. One of these treatises, written by the Rev. Professor Buckland, an Oxford geologist, had an enormous circulation, and earned for its lucky author a handsome sum in addition to the Bridgewater fee of a thousand pounds. This was

in 1836. The author had made his reputation thirteen years before by a book called *Reliquiæ Diluvianæ, or Observations on the Organic Remains Attesting the Action of a Universal Deluge.* Such an event, had it occurred, would have proved more for the power than for the wisdom or goodness of its author; but, whatever might be its bearings on natural religion, the *Reliquiæ* was warmly welcomed as a support to revealed religion, whose authenticity seemed at that time to be closely bound up with the historical truth of a book where a universal deluge is recorded as having actually taken place not many thousand years ago. Buckland subsequently abandoned what he had once defended, and was bitterly assailed by his fellow-clergymen in consequence.[1]

However its relations with Scripture might ultimately be adjusted, geology was supposed to bring incontrovertible proof of the popular religious philosophy by its then accepted doctrine of Catastrophes. Cuvier, the great French palæontologist, taught that Noah's Flood came last in a series of great cataclysms, by which the living population of the globe was periodically cleared off, to be subsequently replaced by a new organic creation. Now, unless the earth were credited with a power of spontaneously generating plants and animals on the largest scale—and that such a power ever did or could exist seemed contrary to all experience—no alternative remained but to admit that God himself intervened on each occasion to fill up the void.

At a time, however, when this argument was being most confidently hawked about, the

[1] White, *Warfare of Science and Theology*, vol. i., p. 232.

hypothesis on which it rested had already received a mortal blow from the greatest living authority on the life-history of the earth. In 1830 Charles Lyell published his famous *Principles of Geology*. That work is one long argument going to prove that the known facts can be explained without the intervention of any such catastrophes as Cuvier demanded. The natural forces now in operation are enough to account for every past change in the climatic conditions and in the distribution of land and water on the earth's surface ever since it became capable of supporting life. There are no abrupt transitions from one geological period to another. All is orderly sequence, and at the same time all is perpetual change. Lyell still admitted that every new species represented a separate act of creation; but his uniformitarian theory made possible the subsequent theory by which the successive appearance of organisms adapted to altered environments has been interpreted as due to the unaided operation of natural causes.

Lyell privately described his theory as striking at the Mosaic cosmogony, but he avoided any public expression of hostility to the prejudices of the age. It is, however, reported on his own testimony, given long afterwards, that this reserve did not save him from social ostracism for having contributed, however indirectly, "to discredit the Pentateuchal accounts of the Creation and the Deluge" (Huxley). It is, at any rate, certain that ladies were excluded from his professional lectures at King's College, London, probably because his subject involved some adverse reference to the Mosaic cosmology. Mrs. Somerville was preached against

in York Cathedral, presumably for the same offence.

So much of the national energy spent itself on politics, religion, and science during the Reform era that less remained available for imaginative literature and history. Brief lyrics, brilliant review articles, and novels of episodical rather than concentrated interest were most in request among readers with little leisure, and most readily supplied by writers on whose time there were many other demands. *Pelham,* the novel that made Bulwer Lytton's reputation (1828), is a series of almost disconnected studies in life and literature, not a romance. Tennyson's earlier poems show vivid inspiration and careful workmanship, but no sustained constructive effort. In prose this was a great age of essayists, made illustrious by the names of Macaulay, Carlyle, De Quincey, J. S. Mill, and John Wilson. Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* (1833–34) is not really a book, but a collection of unsystematic thoughts and disconnected images. The *French Revolution* (1837), indeed, is a great work of art, unequalled by anything that his contemporaries were then doing, or by anything that he himself did afterwards, for splendour, power, and unity; but it is an exception that proves the rule, being, in fact, a political pamphlet of the transcendent kind, the expression of a radicalism that would substitute, not individual liberty, but better and stronger government, for the rotten institutions of the past. The Lectures on *Hero-Worship* (1841) are generally supposed to represent Carlyle's leaning to autocracy as the only legitimate form of government. But, whatever their intention may have been, such is

not the moral they convey. With few exceptions the heroes are religious reformers, poets, men of letters, not men of action, exercising authority, not by force, but by persuasion. The two representative soldiers really serve as a warning against autocracy, for Cromwell totally fails to carry out his ideals in the absence of popular support; while Napoleon, possessing all that Cromwell wanted, has his head turned by uncontrolled dominion, deserts the democratic cause, and perishes by fighting against the laws of justice. Another marked trait of the Lectures is their silent, but probably not unconscious, hostility to the dreams of such enthusiasts for the mediæval Church as Hurrell Froude. Most of the heroes belong to Protestantism; the one mediæval Catholic, Dante, is only made interesting on the human and personal side, his theory of the world being dismissed as obsolete.

Carlyle's own religion at this time was a vague deism inherited from the previous century, combined with a particular hostility to the Tractarians for their attempt to rehabilitate superstition under forms more objectionable than any others to a Scotchman. Another Scotchman, George Combe, taught deism in a more undisguised form to a more popular audience in association with the alleged discoveries of phrenology. His idea of basing education and social reform on cranioscopy was a chimera; but he did good service by pointing to a healthy constitution of brain and body as the necessary condition of mental and moral improvement.

It is to be noticed how Scotchmen stood to the front in every scheme for benefiting the people by cultivating their intelligence. Besides his efforts

on behalf of State-aided education, Lord Brougham was the soul of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. The valuable publications of the Chambers brothers obtained a wide circulation in England as well as in Scotland ; and George Birkbeck, the founder of Mechanics' Institutes, himself a Yorkshireman, owed his enthusiasm for popular education to a prolonged residence in Scotland.

Such enterprises as Brougham's and Birkbeck's, beneficial as they were to the middle classes, left the mass of the labouring population untouched. For them the question was not how to live well, but how to live at all. Brougham had, rather pedantically, hoped the time might come when every cottager would read Bacon. Cobbett observed, with pertinent wit, that he had much rather see every cottager eat bacon. But the one wish seemed nearly as Utopian as the other. A cottager supporting himself, a wife, and five children on from seven to ten shillings a week had much difficulty in providing bare bread, with corn ranging from fifty to seventy shillings a quarter. Factory hands were better paid, and altogether the condition of the people had improved since the Regency ; but their poverty was pitiable, and distress continued to be much aggravated from time to time by a bad harvest or a commercial crisis. The Reform Act had put an end to some great evils ; but others remained unabated, and the decline of political excitement left public opinion more free to occupy itself with these. We shall see in the next chapter what ideas, more or less practical, more or less permanent, responded to the social demands of the age.

Chapter VIII.

IDEALS AND REALITIES

Of all schemes for the regeneration of mankind put forward during the Reform era, the most ambitious and far-reaching originated with Robert Owen (1770–1858). This man had raised himself by genius and conduct from the position of a petty trader to be the head of a great manufactory, and had relinquished that position in order to carry on a world-wide propaganda for his favourite ideas. He may be described as the father of modern Socialism. But his proposals for collective ownership differed widely from the State socialism of more recent times. For their realisation he looked not to government intervention, but to experiments in voluntary co-operation, aided to any extent at first starting by private or public munificence, in the confidence that, once started, they would prove self-supporting, and by successful competition would gradually free industry from the control of individualistic capital. As the foundation of the new social order he devised, and for several years actually put into practice among his own work-people at New Lanark, a peculiar system of education and discipline which replaced the study of words by the study of things, and the use of rewards and punishments by the use of moral suasion. Believing character to be the creature of circumstance, he held that to inflict pain on people

for what they could not help doing was unjust; but, as his methods proved perfectly successful at New Lanark, they might have been defended on grounds of simple expediency, without the intervention of metaphysical abstractions. In fact, Owen's personal magnetism, falling in with the grateful enthusiasm of the Scottish character, exhibited a happy coincidence not to be reckoned on by ordinary educators and rulers, nor even by such experts as Dr. Arnold of Rugby, who, we are told, did not govern by love, but by fear.

Owen ultimately gave up his position at New Lanark for the office of a public agitator, which he was much less fitted to fill. Believing in no existing religion and adhering to no recognised political party, his faith in Co-operation was such that, like some more recent reformers, he dreamed of combining all schools in the support of his educational and communistic schemes. As a natural consequence, the rest of his active life was spent in spinning ropes of sand. Men of the most discordant views—Archbishops and atheists, Radicals and reactionists—were induced to promise their support; but it never went beyond promises. Some important movements—Secularism, industrial co-operation, profit-sharing—may be traced back to his initiative; but these lie off the central line of English evolution as it was being unrolled when Peel came into power.

Chartism was of far more immediate practical importance than anything Owen ever said or did. It may be described as the resumption in a more systematic way of the agitation for Parliamentary

Reform begun under the Regency and temporarily arrested by the Whig measure of 1831–32. A document called the People's Charter, drawn up in 1838, put the extreme democratic claims into shape. Taken in the order of their importance, its articles were: Manhood suffrage, equal electoral districts, vote by ballot, annual Parliaments, abolition of the property qualification at that time required for members of the House of Commons, and instead thereof payment of them for their services. The leaders of the movement are deservedly forgotten, nor need their names be recorded here. The Chartists were as much inferior to Chartism as Owen was superior to the Owenites. They were, in truth, quack doctors drawing attention to a dangerous disease, and so winning a sort of confused sympathy from literary people, not always much more practical than themselves — Wordsworth, Carlyle, Harriet Martineau, and Benjamin Disraeli. Carlyle took hold of the agitation as a good stick to beat Benthamism with. But his own proposals for remedial legislation did not go beyond education and emigration. The one was advocated by every Benthamite, the other by J. S. Mill, the young chief of the school, from whom he had probably picked it up in conversation. Carlyle also gave a gruff approval to the new Poor Law, which the Chartists hated. Wordsworth, in whom the old revolutionary passion had never died out, preferred them to the Whigs, against whom Disraeli also hoped for their aid.

Macaulay put the Whig case against Chartism —which, in this instance, was the case of all sensible people—in one short speech with crushing

effect. According to him, the only demand of supreme importance was manhood suffrage. To grant that would be to place all the property of the kingdom at the mercy of men who proclaimed their intention of confiscating it if they gained the control of Parliament. He pointed out that, among the grievances which those who petitioned for the passing of the People's Charter expected to be redressed, payment of interest on the National Debt was expressly mentioned; and that the monopolies of machinery, of land, and of the means of travelling and transit were also quoted as injustices to be removed. Whence he concluded that to pass the Charter would bring irretrievable ruin on the country.[1]

As against the petitioners this reasoning was conclusive. But our experience of universal suffrage elsewhere has not gone to confirm Macaulay's gloomy anticipations of its probable effect if introduced into England. Where the voters are educated they have too much honesty and good sense to ask for the confiscation of private property. Where they are ignorant they go to the poll in disciplined masses at the bidding of party managers whose desire is rather to secure lucrative offices for themselves than to propose a general scramble for the instruments of production in which they might probably be crushed to death. If by a miracle the Chartist agitation had succeeded, the result might well have been a more complete victory for the reactionists than was won in 1841.

[1] Macaulay, *Miscellaneous Writings and Speeches,* vol. iii., p. 186.

Among the literary sympathisers with Chartism the name of Disraeli has been mentioned. Sympathy, as attributed to him, must not be understood in an emotional sense, for his attitude in reference to the Turkish atrocities forty years later proves that human suffering on a large scale left him absolutely callous. But he saw that, as opinion then set, to expatiate on the wrongs of the labouring poor was a convenient method for acquiring notoriety and power. For the rest, both then and afterwards he failed conspicuously, for one so clever, in forecasting the general trend of progressive ideas. A sort of dandified romanticism playing at the resuscitation of mediæval institutions in Church and State had been the fashion in his youth; and now in the late thirties, when it was waning before the light of science, Disraeli took it up in the spirit of a secondhand broker as a means for the reconstitution of the Tory party. A people maddened with hunger were invited to seek deliverance by rallying round the old aristocracy, the throne, and the altar. Owing to the exigencies of sentimental fiction, Scott and Bulwer Lytton had chosen very young men for their heroes; and Scott's youths, at least, were habitually associated with great affairs of State. Therefore, according to Disraeli, the country and its institutions were, in some mysterious way, to be now saved by its youth. Hence the party formed on his principles became known by the name, or nickname, of Young England. Whether the juniors were to be chiefly employed in the education of their elders, or in what is now called slumming among the cottagers on their fathers' estates, did

not seem clear. On no important political question could the Young Englanders be got to act together, not even on the maintenance of the Corn Laws, which Disraeli himself considered essential to the predominance of the landed interest, and therefore to the salvation of England. To stake the cause of the aristocracy on an odious food-tax showed a singular want of political sagacity in one who was negotiating an alliance between the nobles and the people.

A still greater blunder, if possible, was Disraeli's proposal, borrowed from Bolingbroke, to revive the power of the Crown. This, as Canning and Peel had foretold, proved incompatible with the authority exercised by a truly representative House of Commons; and neither the last independent political act of William IV. in sending for Sir Robert Peel, nor the first political act of the young Queen in refusing to accept Peel's terms, had tended to make royal interference more popular than before.

Disraeli and his young friends seem to have agreed in thinking that they could win over public opinion to recognise the Church of England as a body invested with theocratic powers. No idea could well have been more chimerical. It ran counter to all the traditions of English statesmanship. And the failure of the Tractarian Movement showed it to be particularly ill-timed at that moment. By making national education impossible the Church as a corporation proved herself the people's worst enemy; and the new science was rapidly paralysing her hold on the educated intelligence of the country.

It is remarkable how closely Disraeli, himself a Jew, agreed with Keble in resting the Church's theocratic pretensions on the authority of the Hebrew Scriptures; how they both dreaded Biblical criticism; and how the apostle of Young England gibes at the doctrine of evolution in *Tancred,* his religious romance of 1847, no less scornfully than in his address to the Church Congress of 1865.

Finally, after all these dissolving dreams, we come to the only movement of the late thirties that was practical, progressive, successful, and permanent. This was the agitation for the free importation of corn, conducted by the Anti-Corn-Law League, and associated for ever in the memory of Englishmen with the name of Richard Cobden.

The part played by Cobden and the League in their campaign against the Corn Laws has somewhat interfered with a right apprehension of the history of Free Trade in England. Cobden, of course, condemned all commercial restrictions on principle and as a matter of policy for his own country and for the whole world. But he was not the first by a good many to preach that principle in its entirety, or to make it the keynote of a successful policy. Plato, who created political economy, also held that imports should be untaxed; the French physiocrats, Adam Smith, and Ricardo placed his *aperçus* on a scientific basis, after whom came statesmen like Shelburne, Pitt, Canning, and Huskisson to carry them into practice. It happened that the new policy of more or less

withdrawing artificial protection from native industry was applied in the first instance to manufactures, because England, as a great corn-growing country, did not need to import foreign grain. Agriculture did, indeed, receive what was called protection ; but this took the form of giving bounties on the exportation of corn. It was hoped that the bounties, by creating an artificial dearth, would raise prices at home ; but as they stimulated production the actual effect was that prices fell. The importation of foreign corn had indeed been prohibited since the time of Charles II.; but, as plenty generally prevailed, the prohibition was not felt as a grievance.

With the industrial revolution and the rapid growth of population a change set in. Prices rose with the new demand for food ; and a series of laws passed in the interest of the landowners pushed up the limit on the sliding scale of scarcity until foreign wheat was practically refused admission so long as English wheat stood at less than eighty shillings a quarter. To admit it even then hardly relieved the distress ; for in the uncertainty of finding a market the foreign grain-merchants did not care to lay in stores which England might or might not be pleased to buy.

It was thought that a real representation of the people would put an end to such exactions ; and the distress during the early years of peace produced, for the first time, a widespread demand for Parliamentary Reform. Liberty, in Shelley's phrase, meant—

> Clothes and fire and food
> For the trampled multitude

—a reason the more why it should be refused by the men in power. In other directions, however, concessions were made to the industrial interest even by an unreformed Parliament. Taxes on the raw material of manufactures were partially repealed, and reciprocity was substituted for the restrictions formerly placed on foreign shipping, while the duties on imported manufactures were vastly reduced. This was done by a nominally Tory Ministry. The Whigs of 1830 were Free Traders in theory; but they had neither leisure nor ability to do anything beyond reducing the paper duties. A series of good harvests postponed the Corn Law question for some years longer.

So matters remained until the terrible distress of 1837, continued and aggravated through the next five years, made the condition of the people the one all-absorbing interest of politics and literature. Owenites, Chartists, Young Englanders, agitators for the repeal of the new Poor Law, agreed in assuming that there was wealth enough in the country to afford a comfortable subsistence all round if only it were better distributed, by private or public charity, or by voluntary or compulsory Socialism. The scientific economists alone showed how the national wealth could be both increased and better distributed by granting complete Free Trade. According to them, the Corn Laws did mischief in more than one way, directly by raising the price of bread, indirectly by checking our foreign trade and diverting capital from investments where it could be turned to the best account to investments where it was turned to the least account. At home capital was diverted from the

manufacturing industries in which we excelled all other nations to agriculture, where, by the law of diminishing returns, not only was there less profit to begin with, but that profit was always growing less and less for equal amounts of capital expended on the soil. Abroad the reverse process obtained. The nations which would gladly have grown more corn wherewith to buy our cloths and calicoes, finding that we refused it, built factories of their own and set up prohibitory tariffs to guard their new industries against our cheaper goods. It was contended that the repeal of the Corn Laws would enlarge the field of employment for English labour and capital by giving a new stimulus both to the import and to the export trade.

The Protectionists did not deny all this, but they argued that to make England dependent on foreign countries for her food-supplies would be most hazardous ; that to draw the peasantry away from the country to the towns would injure the national physique ; that to lower the price of corn would be to lower rents, which was an act of confiscation—at the expense, too, of the class to whom England owed all her greatness.

To keep the people in a chronic state of want and misery seemed a rather costly insurance against the risk of future famine in the highly improbable contingency of our being at war with all the corn-producing countries of the world at the same time ; and the middle classes, whom Reform had made sovereign, believed that they, rather than the noble lords who called robbery property, were the brain and backbone of England. Their wealth and energy had, in fact, brought us safely out of the

wars undertaken and misconducted by the ruling territorial aristocracy. And the literary leader of Young England, the political bravo of the high Tory party—Disraeli—himself admitted that the condition of the agricultural poor was even worse than that of the factory operatives.

So stood the balance of argument. In Parliament, and probably in the country, the balance of opinion stood heavily against Free Trade. But the progress of Liberalism had removed the restrictions by which reason used to be prevented from turning itself into public opinion, and had created a machinery by which the opinion of the people could turn itself more rapidly into the opinion of Parliament. In 1836 an Anti-Corn Law Association was founded in London by some Benthamites, and another of the same name two years later at Manchester, which in 1839 became the Anti-Corn Law League. This body carried on an agitation of unexampled magnitude all over the country, collecting enormous sums of money, assembling crowded meetings to hear addresses in favour of Free Trade, disseminating Free Trade pamphlets and leaflets by tens of thousands, prompting the acquisition of electoral qualifications by Free Traders, contesting Protectionist votes on the register, fighting Protectionist candidates at by-elections, making Free Trade motions in Parliament, appealing, and at last not in vain, to the all-powerful Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel, to repeat what he had done for Catholic Emancipation, sacrificing the interests of his party to the interests of his country, which this time were the interests of all mankind.

At what precise date Peel's conversion to complete Free Trade took place is uncertain, and of no interest to anyone but his biographers. His adherence to Protection had long been avowedly a matter more of expediency than of principle. His first Budget embodied a rather complicated arrangement, which had the effect of lowering the corn duties to one half of what they had previously been; and this was accompanied by a large remission of protective duties on manufactured articles. Three years later, by a comprehensive scheme of Tariff Reform in the true sense, 430 articles were relieved of import duties, and all duties on British exports were repealed.

Disraeli at first applauded Peel for taking up what he then chose to describe as the genuine Tory policy—the policy of Pitt. When the Conservative Administration of 1841 was being formed he had applied for office, and had been refused. Perhaps he still hoped to conciliate the Prime Minister by this unexpected support. If so, he was mistaken. Then he turned to the extreme Tories, who were becoming mutinous at the growing liberality of their middle-class chief. They had another grievance besides the reformed tariff. In 1845 Peel proposed and carried an augmentation of the grant to Maynooth, a training college for Irish Roman Catholic priests. Judged by the ideas of that age, it was a statesmanlike measure, and it received the support of Cobden and Macaulay. But to subsidise the priests agreed better with Whig than with Tory traditions; nor could such a grant have been carried against the No Popery wing of the Conservative party without the aid

of Liberal votes. Then the unscrupulous and desperate adventurer saw and seized his chance. In a series of speeches unrivalled for picturesque sarcasm, Disraeli taunted Peel with having stolen the Whigs' clothes while they were bathing, with treating the landed interest like a cast-off mistress, with turning Conservatism into an organised hypocrisy. The Prime Minister's mind was one vast Appropriation Clause ; he resembled the Turkish Admiral who steered his fleet right into the enemy's port. After the most virulent of these attacks Peel asked why, then, had the honourable gentleman wished to serve under one of whom, by his own account, his opinion had always been so bad. Disraeli replied that he had never made any such request. Sir Robert quietly repeated his assertion, but refrained even in that emergency from producing the written evidence of his treacherous assailant's falsehood; and the damning letter remained unpublished until nearly half a century after his death.

Stuart absolutism received its mortal blow from the Irish insurrection of 1641. Irish agitation broke up the reactionary Toryism of Peel's youth. Irish famine was now to ruin the Protectionist Conservatism of his triumphant prime. Our unequalled aristocratic government, which made the Irish bigoted Romanists in the seventeenth century, and destroyed Irish manufactures in the eighteenth century, had in the nineteenth century completed its fatal work by the utter degradation of Irish agriculture. For want of any other outlet the whole industry of the country was thrown on the

land; and the landlords, in order to multiply the electors who voted at their dictation, had subdivided the land among the greatest possible number of tenant-farmers holding their little plots at a rack-rent. These men had no capital and no motive to improve the land, as their improvements, if any, were liable to confiscation under the form of an increased rent. Many landlords lived away from their estates, delegating their authority to merciless agents, or letting them out in large farms on leases to middlemen who sublet them to a swarm of tenants-at-will, living themselves like gentlemen on what they could extract from these miserable serfs. As a means of subsistence the peasants were given a small piece of land, on which they raised a scanty crop. Potatoes were the food that could be grown in the greatest abundance with the smallest amount of labour. Potatoes accordingly became the staple food of the people. The system resulted in a rapid growth of population, thus increasing the competition for land and placing the poor more and more at the mercy of the rich. Those who could not pay their rent were turned out on the highways to starve. Until 1838 there was no Poor Law for Ireland; the system then introduced did not sanction the distribution of outdoor relief, and the workhouses had not sufficient accommodation for the mass of pauperism thrown on them in times of distress.

A Commission appointed by Peel "to investigate the conditions on which Irish land was held" reported in favour of compensating evicted tenants for improvements made by them with the permission of authorities appointed for the purpose; and a

measure giving partial effect to its recommendations was laid before the House of Lords in 1845, but excited so much opposition on the ground of invading the rights of property that it had to be withdrawn almost without discussion.[1] Apparently the Young Englanders had not educated their fathers up to the point of enabling them to see on which side, in this instance, as in the instance of the Corn Laws, the rights of property were to be found.

A people so circumstanced and thrown for subsistence on a single esculent are exposed to famine whenever, as frequently happens with the potato, their staple food is ruined by bad weather or by disease. The autumn of 1845 was rainy, and a new form of blight destroyed the potato crop. Free importation of corn became a necessity. Lord John Russell, who had hitherto advocated a fixed eight-shilling duty on foreign corn, now, by a public declaration, committed the Whig party to Free Trade. Peel had already been converted by Cobden's exposure of the miseries that Protection entailed on the English agricultural population. He proposed the immediate suspension of the Corn Laws, to be followed by their gradual abolition. At his first Cabinet Council all but three members dissented ; at the second, held in December, all but two agreed. What made the services of those two indispensable does not appear ; but anyhow Peel resigned. The Queen sent for Russell, who accepted, but failed to form an Administration, for the very odd reason that Lord Grey, the Reform

[1] Spencer Walpole's *History of England,* vol. v., p. 127.

Minister's son, had to be included, and that he would not sit in the same Cabinet with Lord Palmerston, who could not be left out. Peel returned to office, having in the meantime converted one of his late recalcitrant colleagues. The other, Lord Stanley, remaining obstinate, was replaced by W. E. Gladstone. At that time the future Liberal leader sat for a nomination borough in the gift of the Duke of Newcastle. The Duke now handed it over to a Tory, at the same time ousting his own son, Lord Lincoln, Peel's Irish Secretary, from the representation of South Notts. Lincoln remained out of Parliament for three months, and Gladstone for eighteen months. This was the same Duke that justified his eviction of tenants who voted against his candidates by asking had he not a right to do as he liked with his own. The Dukes of Richmond and Buckingham pursued a similarly obstructive policy in preventing Free Trade Ministers from retaining their seats. So much for the claim to altruism put forward on behalf of the landowning oligarchy by its modern apologists.

Peel did not introduce immediate or complete Free Trade. He proposed to retain for the next three years a duty on foreign corn varying inversely as the home price from ten to four shillings per quarter, after which it was to remain fixed at a shilling per quarter. Duties on manufactured goods were reduced from twenty to ten per cent., and on half-manufactured goods to five per cent., while the duty on raw material was entirely abolished. Abolished also was the duty on live stock and dead meat; the duties on butter, cheese,

and hops were lowered fifty per cent.; the differential duty against slave-grown sugar still continued, but in a diminished amount, as likewise did the duties on timber and tallow.

In the speech that introduced these great changes Peel touched on the question of reciprocity, or what is now called Fair Trade. He explained that his own policy had been adopted in complete independence of what foreign countries were doing or would do. He admitted that since our departure from Protection their tariffs, instead of being lowered, had in some instances been raised against English goods. But he parried this consideration by the fact that during the same period our export trade had increased. And he used the one fact to explain the other. The Protectionist countries were injuring themselves by their system of exclusion, and therefore their manufacturers could not resist the competition of our less fettered industry.[1] That our example would eventually tell on their governments he did indeed believe, but without staking his credit on the fulfilment of that prediction. And had a vision of the world's industrial history for the next sixty years unfolded itself before his gaze, we have no reason to think that the great Minister would have gone back on his adhesion to the principles of the Anti-Corn Law League. Precisely the same remark applies to Cobden. He anticipated a coming era of universal Free Trade. But he never argued for the abolition of the corn tax on the ground that it would be followed by a world-wide economic revolution, or

[1] Sir Robert Peel, *Speeches,* vol. iv., p. 601.

hinted at an admission that England would be worse off than before if other countries refused to follow in her footsteps.

It has been asked why Free Trade did not immediately lower the price of corn. The fact is so; but we must remember that the harvests for some years previously had been exceptionally good, and that the cheapness thus introduced was at least maintained; that a quite appreciable duty continued to be levied until 1849; and that foreign corn-growers needed some time to make arrangements for supplying the English market. When sufficient time had elapsed for the new demand to operate the price fell to an unprecedented extent.

Peel's Budget was carried by a coalition of Conservative Free Traders and Liberals, the House of Lords not daring to resist. But that victory was his Trafalgar. On the night when the Corn Bill passed the Lords his Ministry fell before a factious combination of Liberals and Protectionists in the Commons. English misgovernment had led to famine in Ireland, famine to outrage, and outrage to a new Coercion Bill, one article of which rendered any person found out of doors at night in a proclaimed district liable to transportation. At this time the Conservative party had split into two. Less than a third followed Peel; the others, who still clung to Protection, placed themselves under the leadership of Lord George Bentinck, an ignorant racing man with a head for figures, who allowed himself to be made the tool of Disraeli's ambition, while at the same time he gratified a relentless thirst for vengeance on one whom he believed to have been the cause of his

kinsman Canning's death. Bentinck and his followers had voted for the first reading of the Coercion Bill; they opposed the second reading on a frivolous pretext, and by combining with those who had resisted it from the beginning placed the Government in a minority of seventy-three. Peel resigned, and was succeeded by Lord John Russell at the head of a purely Whig Administration, including Grey and Palmerston, who by this time had contrived to make up the difference that had been found insuperable only six months before.

The Free Trade question introduced new lines of party cleavage on the Liberal as well as on the Conservative side. Some Whigs—Lord Melbourne among the number—believed in Protection. Some of the ablest Tories—Gladstone for one—followed Peel when he forsook it. The Benthamites, who had been the first Free Traders, were more or less Freethinkers, and so as a rule were the Foxite Whigs. The League habitually appealed to Christian charity against the policy of commercial restrictions, and its three greatest orators were men of deep religious conviction, combined, it is true, with very liberal religious opinions—Cobden, the most persuasive, as a Churchman; John Bright, the most powerful, as a Quaker; W. J. Fox, the most brilliant, as a Unitarian minister. The Anglican clergy were Protectionists almost to a man; Thomas Spencer, Herbert Spencer's uncle, being one of the very few exceptions. This seems to have been due to their connection with the landlord class. The Wesleyan ministers, from whatever reason, held the same opinions. But a great

conference of Nonconformist ministers assembled at Manchester in 1841 passed resolutions condemnatory of the tax on corn, as did also similar conferences at Edinburgh and Carnarvon.[1] This association of Nonconformity with Liberal politics has probably contributed to its subsequent development on lines of increased dogmatic liberality.

Another consequence of the Free Trade movement was the growing identification of Radicalism with a policy of peace, non-intervention, and disarmament. There had been a connection of the same sort before, but it was rather accidental than essential. The wars with America and with the French Republic had been or had looked like wars against popular government; and the war with Napoleon, although fought partly in self-defence and partly on behalf of European liberty, had contributed to the aggrandisement of the plutocracy in England. A great change took place with the revolutionary movement of 1820, as a consequence of which England under Canning definitely took sides with the cause of free nationalities in Europe and America. This made Liberal opinion more favourable to armed intervention in the affairs of other countries, while absolutist Tories, with Wellington at their head, advocated a policy of neutrality and strict respect for treaty rights.

Among the Canningites who coalesced with Lord Grey in 1830 the ablest and most vigorous was Lord Palmerston, who held the post of Foreign Secretary with a break of only a few months down

[1] Molesworth, *History of England,* vol. ii., p. 216; Morley, *Life of Cobden,* vol. i., p. 232.

to the Whig defeat of 1841. He steadily carried on the tradition of his old chief, extending the power and prestige of England by the support he gave to constitutional government in Belgium and Southern Europe, by his resistance to French and Russian ambition in the Near East, and, more questionably, by his aggressive action in the Far East. His greatest successes were won by diplomatic pressure, with the help of very little fighting. But his Turkish policy, brilliant as it was, had been carried out at the risk of war with France and with the certainty of prolonging for an indefinite period the blighting tyranny of the Sultan over some of the fairest regions on the globe. Its immediate success proved highly prejudicial to our own interests in Asia. For, as a counter-move to Palmerston's opposition on the Bosporus, Russia raised up enemies against us in Afghanistan ; and, finally, the blundering of the Indian Government brought on a war with that country signalised by the most frightful disaster that has ever befallen a British army, the annihilation of Elphinstone's force in the Khyber Pass.

While these deplorable events were happening on the north-west frontier of India we were carrying on a still more disgraceful war with China. When the Charter of the East India Company expired, in 1833, the Chinese trade was thrown open to all British merchants, and many of them used the opportunity thus offered to introduce large quantities of opium into China, although its importation was forbidden by the Chinese Government. As might have been expected, collisions of a more and more violent character occurred between the

officials on both sides; and, although Lord Palmerston gave orders that the Emperor's prohibition of the traffic in a pernicious drug should be respected, they were not obeyed. Finally, the Chinese Commissioner in Canton insisted on the surrender and destruction of all the British opium in China, valued at some millions sterling. Unfortunately, a part of the Indian revenue, too large to be spared, depended on the opium monopoly, and the value of this again depended on keeping the Chinese market open. Our people treated the destruction of the smuggled opium-chests as an outrage to be avenged by war, and war accordingly ensued. After some years of fighting, chequered by the usual disasters, it ended with the submission of our helpless opponents. China had to pay compensation for the opium destroyed and a heavy indemnity besides. Certain ports were opened to British trade, and, although the importation of opium was not yet legalised, no very energetic resistance to it could be expected from the Chinese authorities after such bitter experience of what came from meddling with its freedom.

At the conclusion of peace Lord Ashley, whose acquaintance we have already made as a defender of the defenceless, wrote in his private journal: "It may be unpatriotic, it may be un-British, I cannot rejoice in our successes; we have triumphed in one of the most lawless, unnecessary, and unfair struggles in the records of history." Next year he moved a resolution in the House of Commons condemnatory of the trade in opium as, among other evils, "destructive of all relations of amity between England and China," but withdrew his

motion at the entreaty of Sir Robert Peel, who "indulged in a deprecatory argument of which the gist seemed to be that, as we could not put down gin at home, we need not concern ourselves about introducing 20,000 chests of opium into China every year."[1]

In 1836 Cobden had published a pamphlet criticising Palmerston's policy of supporting Turkey against Russia, and generally advocating the principle of non-intervention. We do not hear that he or Bright took any part in opposing the Afghan and Chinese wars, or that they supported Lord Ashley in his attack on the opium trade, probably because all their energies were then absorbed in the Free Trade struggle. When Free Trade triumphed those energies became available for a wider policy, and the late chiefs of the League proved, by their opposition to the Russian war and the second Chinese war, that the principles of international justice and peace had become an integral part of their creed. They valued trade, but not the extension of trade by violence and chicane.

It was not only in the Levant, in the Far East, or in Ireland, that the interests of justice and mercy collided with the interests of national vainglory or plutocratic greed. I have already touched on the history of factory legislation, and in that connection I have shown with how little truth an exclusive claim has been set up on behalf of Toryism for the merit of intervening to protect the helpless sufferers

[1] Hodder, *Life of Lord Shaftesbury*, vol. i., p. 475.

against their taskmasters. Lord Ashley complained with reason of the extent to which the Whig Government of 1833 had limited his scheme for the prohibition of child-labour in factories, and again in 1836 of the imperfect way in which the law actually passed was allowed to work. But Peel had not been long in power before the great philanthropist discovered that less was to be hoped for from him and from his colleagues than from their predecessors. "This Government," he writes in his private diary, "is ten times more hostile to my views than the last, and they carry it *(sic)* out in a manner far more severe and embarrassing."[1]

In August, 1840, Ashley obtained a Commission to inquire into the employment of children in mines and collieries. Its first report appeared in May, 1842, unveiling a mass of misery and depravity that left the evils of factory labour far behind, and approached the horrors of the African slave-trade. The Home Office tried, but failed, first to keep back the report, and then to prevent its sale. This time public opinion was fairly roused, and Ashley's Bill to forbid the labour of women and children in coal-pits passed both Houses in the same Session, unsupported by the Government, received with coldness by the Lords, and nearly wrecked by their amendments, one of the worst being due to the Marquess of Londonderry, a high Tory peer.

By an Act passed in 1844 children were forbidden to work in factories under the age of nine, and to work for more than six hours and a-half a day under thirteen. Ashley proposed a ten-hour day

[1] *Life*, vol. i., p. 409.

for young persons from thirteen to twenty-one, but failed to carry his amendment. His supporters were mostly Conservatives, whom we may not uncharitably conjecture to have been in some degree animated by hatred of the manufacturers; but he also carried with him such representative Whigs as Russell, Palmerston, and Macaulay. By his own account, his "strength lay at first among the Radicals, the Irishmen, and a few sincere Whigs and Conservatives."[1] Members of the League suspected the sincerity of a philanthropist who voted for taxing the people's bread, and who showed no interest in the woes of the labourers on his father's Dorsetshire estate. Lord Ashley set himself right with the Free Traders by accepting total repeal, but lost his seat in consequence, and remained out of Parliament for years. During his absence the conduct of the Ten Hours Bill was entrusted to John Fielden, a cotton manufacturer, a Radical, and a Unitarian. After one more defeat it passed both Houses by large majorities in 1847, many Conservatives, according to Ashley, taking this opportunity of revenging themselves on Peel and the League.[2] Further legislation in 1850 and 1853, carried by Liberal Ministers, gave fresh protection to women and children against overwork. The same principle has since been more widely extended and safeguarded with the co-operation of both parties, and individual statesmen who were once opposed to it have admitted that they were mistaken. That the Tories should claim this as a triumph for themselves is even more

[1] *Life*, vol. ii., p. 209.

[2] *Life*, vol. ii., p. 202.

absurd than their now abandoned claim to the championship of Free Trade. Both are particular applications of Bentham's supreme principle—the greatest happiness of the greatest number—which no single rule either of interference or of non-interference can exhaust.

Lord Ashley complains that at first only a single minister of religion supported him, and even to the last very few.[1] He is distressed and puzzled "to find support from infidels or non-professors; opposition or coldness from religionists or declaimers." He points out that in the war with Scinde (1842) all the bad faith was on the side of the Christian conquerors, the vain appeals to justice on the side of the Mohammedan Ameers,[2] as previously, after the Opium War, that "Christians had shed more heathen blood in two years than heathens had shed of Christian blood in two centuries";[3] hears also with disgust that "many persons of *piety* defend and practise slavery" in America.[4] Yet, according to him, the salvation of the English poor depended on their being given a religious education, and a dogmatic one at that. Sir James Graham's abortive Factory Bill of 1843 contained provisions, more or less compulsory, for the education of the half-time children, the schools to be mainly under clerical control. Dissenters and Roman Catholics not unreasonably objected to a scheme for practically handing over the factory children to the tuition of the Church of England. Graham sought to con-

[1] *Life*, vol. ii., p. 202.
[2] *Ibid*, vol. ii., p. 11.
[3] *Ibid*, vol. i., pp. 440-41.
[4] *Ibid*, p. 448.

ciliate them—vainly, as the event proved—by directing that Bible teaching should be limited to reading the text, without note or comment. For the sake of peace, Ashley accepted this arrangement, but described it as "leaving a Socinian in Socinian ignorance, and a Socialist in Socialist impurities," and spoke of himself as feeling "a nausea almost to faintness" at having to gulp it down.[1]

Lord Ashley was, for an Evangelical, exceptionally statesmanlike and tolerant. But, besides objecting to simple Bible teaching, he passionately opposed Peel's increased grant to Maynooth College, and in this he not only represented the opinion of Peel's own party, but the prevailing opinion of Great Britain. For having supported the grant, Macaulay, otherwise a most popular candidate, lost his seat at Edinburgh in the general election of 1847. Up to 1847 English Roman Catholic schools were refused a share in the education grant. In that year the injustice was removed, not without violent opposition from Lord Ashley and the Wesleyans, at the motion of Sir William Molesworth,[2] a Benthamite, who probably had no religious belief — a suspicion also attaching to Macaulay.

Thus once more, as in the previous decade, we find theological prejudices opposing a barrier to educational progress which the most disinterested benevolence could not overcome, which had to be met by a radical change in the intellectual con-

[1] *Life*, vol. i., p. 461.

[2] Mrs. Fawcett, *Life of Sir W. Molesworth*, p. 262.

victions of the people. After studying the English political and social revolution, we must now return to trace the course of that scientific, philosophical, and critical movement whose still unexhausted impulses are continuing to bear us forward towards new horizons at the present day.

Chapter IX.

THE MASTER-BUILDERS

During the earlier part of the nineteenth century a strong interest in Bacon's philosophy may be observed among the young Liberals of the period. It led them to conceive the discoveries and inventions of their own age as part of a general movement in which political reform represented no more than a single line of advance. But it soon appeared that the great Chancellor's work had all to be done over again. Sir John Herschel's *Discourse on the Study of Natural Philosophy,* published in 1830, showed, by its analysis of the experimental methods, what Bacon, not being himself an expert, could not know—that is, how scientific discoveries are actually made. It was followed, in 1837, by Whewell's *History of the Inductive Sciences,* a work which, although imperfect and in some parts retrograde, had the merit of suggesting still more forcibly the idea of science as one vast and connected body of doctrine. J. S. Mill acknowledges that, without the facts brought together by Whewell, his own *Logic* would not have been written.

Besides these products of native thought, a potent foreign influence, acting in the same direction, suddenly came into play. The earlier volumes of Auguste Comte's *Philosophie Positive* were appearing in Paris at this time, and speedily attracted the notice of some influential British

thinkers. Comte taught that the earliest social institutions were founded on theological conceptions of nature, on the belief that all phenomena are the product of personal volitions. Personal government and militarism go together with such views. Next comes a metaphysical or transitional period, in which abstract entities take the place of gods or of God as the explanation of whatever happens to us or about us. Finally, with the discovery that phenomena result from the invariable properties of matter acting by fixed laws of co-existence and succession, begins the positive or scientific stage of human progress, the maturity and perfection of society. Theologies, monarchies, and militarism, already undermined by metaphysical criticism, are destined to disappear in that ultimate stage, being replaced by a systematic intelligence of the world, founded on observation and reasoning, enabling us to foresee and provide for the future, and accompanied by a peaceful reorganisation of society on an industrial basis. The object of Comte's Positive Philosophy is to replace the dogmatic summaries of mediæval Catholicism and the abstract metaphysical systems of a later day by a conspectus of the fundamental sciences arranged in their logical order, with a general account of their methods, principles, and laws. At the summit of the series is placed the new science of sociology, which Comte claims as his own special creation. In a masterly survey of universal history he traces the development of society through the growth and decline of theology and war up to the dawn of an age when science and industry shall reign supreme.

Mill had been prepared to accept Comte's philosophy in so far as it agreed with what was permanent in eighteenth-century rationalism and what was progressive in nineteenth-century historical romanticism, by a study of the great Scottish thinkers, and by a similar though less complete training in modern science. He had long been preparing a systematic work on logic; it was completed almost simultaneously with the appearance of Comte's last volume, and incorporated some of the Frenchman's views, with qualifications rendering them less offensive to English prejudices. Mill accepts the law of the Three Stages, but tries to show that the belief in a fixed order of nature is quite compatible with the belief in a personal Creator, although in private he made no secret of not sharing that belief himself. In another way, however, Mill's *System of Logic* is more hostile to theology even than Comte's Positivism. Comte is so occupied with laws that he seems to overlook their true relation to causes. How phenomena are produced, he tells us, is beyond the power of man to know. All we know or need know is the order of their appearance. But no dogmatic pronouncements of the kind can prevent people from speculating on the subject; and the most effectual way to satisfy their curiosity is to show, as Mill shows, by an analysis of the idea itself, that causation means no more than unconditional antecedence. If something happens, something else will happen, and so on for ever. In order that something may happen, something else must have happened immediately before it, and so back for ever. What we say of any one event

may be said with as good reason of any other event as a happening, and therefore of the whole world conceived as a vast process of change. Mill calls this the "Law of Universal Causation." He expresses it by saying: "The state of the whole universe at any instant we believe to be the consequence of its state at the previous instant, insomuch that one who knew all the agents which exist at the present moment, their collocation in space, and all their properties—in other words, the laws of their agency—could predict the whole subsequent history of the universe."[1] This belief alone makes scientific induction possible; and when we talk about a reign of law, no more and no less than the reign of universal causation is implied.

Mill's philosophy goes beyond Comte's Positivism, and first gives it a solid foundation. No volitions, human or divine, interrupt the universal orderly sequence: volitions enter into it at most as links in an unbroken chain of causation. Nor is there any need to assume a First Cause for the world as a whole. For the law applies only to change, to what demonstrably has a beginning, not to the totality of things in which changes occur.[2]

According to Mill, we know this great truth, like every other truth, by experience alone—by having observed in numberless cases that every change has been preceded by another change, that in the same circumstances the same antecedent is followed by the same consequent, that no change

[1] *Logic,* bk. iii., chap. v., section 8.

[2] This is first brought out in the essay on *Theism,* published after Mill's death; but it can be read between the lines of the *Logic.*

has ever been shown to occur without an antecedent. Even the laws of arithmetic and geometry have no other proof than the evidence of unbroken experience in their favour.

While philosophers were setting forth the first principles of science in terms of such comprehensive generality, science was working up from the detailed investigation of particular phenomena, by the methods of experiment and reasoning, to generalisations almost as wide in their scope. Beginning in 1815, Michael Faraday, the greatest experimentalist of that or any age, had carried on a long series of researches, in the course of which he rediscovered what was already known on the Continent—that magnetism may be produced by electricity; and discovered for the first time that electricity may be produced from magnetism, both electricity and magnetism from mechanical motion, and mechanical motion from both, the resulting amounts of energy being always proportioned to the amounts expended elsewhere. He also succeeded in correlating magnetism with light, which had long been known as a product of electricity and of chemical affinity.

It is from this correlation of the physical forces, first completely established by Faraday, that our whole system of electric lighting and electro-motor machinery, destined ultimately to purify the air from smoke, has taken rise. Its consequences in the world of thought have been even more momentous. From the idea of correlation was deduced the still higher idea of conservation, the principle that the quantity of energy in existence

always remains constant, none being ever created or destroyed. This truth, first enunciated by Mohr, a German savant, in 1837, was rediscovered by Grove five years later, and made the subject of lectures delivered before the London Institution in 1842–43, but not published as a book until 1846. At the same time another English physicist, Joule, was ascertaining, by exact experimental measurement, the mechanical equivalent of heat.

Mill himself always remained rather sceptical about the philosophical value of these researches. But for younger thinkers they had the supreme importance of giving scientific precision to his own, or rather Laplace's, law of universal causation. It must be noticed in this connection that the idea of conservation did not become the common property even of the most highly educated classes until about 1858.

Assuming universal causation to be true, organic evolution follows from it as a necessary consequence. Geology shows that there was a time when the present species of plants and animals did not exist. They must therefore have originated either directly from their inorganic elements, or by a process of gradual variation from pre-existing species. All experience goes against spontaneous generation, all experience testifies to gradual variation; therefore the second alternative is adopted. We saw how, before the end of the eighteenth century, Erasmus Darwin enunciated the doctrine of evolution; but its first systematic exposition in the English language did not appear till 1844. This was a book called *Vestiges of the*

Natural History of Creation, by Robert Chambers, an Edinburgh bookseller. Chambers was not a scientific expert, nor altogether an original thinker, but he had studied scientific literature to better purpose than any professor, and he brought together a mass of evidence going to show that the solar system, the earth's crust, the organic world, and human civilisation had been gradually developed under the action of natural forces.

Throughout, the author's attitude towards religion is most conciliatory. Development is exhibited as another proof of design, and therefore as a fresh argument in favour of theism—the very position occupied by Bishop Temple forty years later, and now accepted by most theologians. It is also "reconciled" with Scripture, with no worse, if with no better, success than geology had been "reconciled" before it. Nevertheless, the *Vestiges* raised a storm, and probably would have ruined the bookselling business of the Chambers brothers if Robert's connection with it had not been kept a close secret. People had not yet been taught that evolution leaves Christianity stronger than ever; they thought that to admit man's development from a lower animal would seriously shake the assurance of his possessing an immortal soul; nor did they relish the prospect of his being superseded in the lordship of earth by some higher animal—or what a German plagiarist of English ideas has since called the superman. Modern science has added fresh arguments for evolution to those employed by Chambers; but the considerations that now recommend it to popular audiences are no other than those urged in the *Vestiges.* If in

two generations they have come to exercise a more persuasive influence, this is not least because the resisting power of theology has been weakened by internal decay.

English literature has often presented under an imaginative form the criticism of what is mischievous or rotten in real life, and the endeavour to replace it by nobler constructions of an ideal type. Perhaps for this reason great reforming periods seem less favourable to great literature than periods of reaction or stagnation. We have seen how literature bloomed in the dismal epochs of 1799 and 1817, and how it declined under Canning and Brougham; we have now to glance at its rebirth in the magnificent early Victorian period, when Melbourne's policy was to let things alone, when Peel's policy was to delay reforms until they commended themselves to the agricultural mind. All the great writers of that age were more or less hostile to such quiescence, to such procrastination; all were animated by a discontent more or less divine. We know some of them best in their later days, tamed by wealth and honour, thankful to rest themselves and a little impatient with the restlessness of their juniors. We look on Macaulay as a placid Whig, on Carlyle as a foe to modern Liberalism. But Macaulay was to some extent a Radical, and in India a great reformer; Carlyle was ready with "plenty of Radicalism," though not quite of Mill's sort, if Mill had made him editor of the *London Review*. We remember Tennyson as a timid Conservative, and Browning as a fantastic antiquarian. But the young Tennyson

gloried in change and novelty as such; all his hopes were for a future that should not be like the past. He bids the bells—

> Ring out the old, ring in the new,
> Ring out the false, ring in the true;

his heart is with the workers who are "ever reaping something new"; he goes with advancing science, and looks forward to an age of universal peace. To the same effect, but with more swing and power, Browning exclaims:—

> 'Tis time
> New hopes should animate the world, new light
> Should dawn from new revealings on a race
> Weighed down so long, forgotten so long.

For Browning also, like Burns and Keats, beneficent action rather than poetry was the ideal. Genius, he tells us in *Sordello*, is given to make mankind act, not to amuse them by seeing its possessor act each of them.[1] Carlyle had the same passion for work in preference to words, and could no more satisfy it than Browning. It turned with him to a glorification of great rulers; with Browning it vanished before a philosophy that glorified love as the only good in the world.

If Carlyle ever had hopes of an office under government, they must have perished with the advent of Sir Robert Peel to power. He replied to the Conservative reaction by editing the *Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell,* practically a vindication of England's greatest ruler against both Whigs and Tories, and at the same time a vindication of Puritanism against the Oxford Movement. Lord Melbourne's fall may be thanked on stronger

[1] *Works,* vol. i., p. 155 (the seventeen-volume edition).

grounds for two other monumental contributions to historical Liberalism. Grote was left free by his retirement from Parliament to go on with his History of Greece; and Macaulay was left free by the loss of office to go on with his History of England. Grote's work has been called a pamphlet in twelve volumes in defence of Athenian democracy. Macaulay's History never developed the full proportions contemplated by its author, but the fragment he achieved told, so far as it went, against the Legitimist absolutism brought into fashion by the Tractarian and Romantic currents combined.

While science, philosophy, poetry, and history combined were thus liberalising English thought through and through, prose fiction was contributing its share to the transformation of English social ideals. Dickens and Thackeray are the greatest novelists of the early Victorian period. Now it has been observed that Dickens "spent his early manhood among the politicians trained in Bentham's school," and that he "hardly ever wrote a novel without attacking an abuse"; while Thackeray's "opinions have a strong resemblance to those to which Rousseau gave popularity."[1] Indeed, Thackeray goes farther than Rousseau in pouring contempt on the rich and great, and in denouncing the adulation given to high rank by the English middle classes. Intensely modern and *bourgeois* in his view of life, and a warm admirer of American society, he has nothing but scornful mockery for the pietistic and patriarchal feudalism of Young

[1] Maine, *Popular Government*, pp. 153–54.

England. Then comes Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, with its glorification of passion as a leveller of social distinctions, followed by *Villette,* with its merciless picture of Jesuit morality put in action under the most favourable conditions. From a literary point of view, both works have set before all subsequent novelists the model of a style unequalled for its combination of splendour and strength.

This gospel of pure passionate love, as against conventionality, mammon-worship, selfish ambition, sybaritism, and profligacy, found another exponent in Emily Brontë, notwithstanding the haughty stoicism of her personal character. It is, as I have said, the very essence of Browning's philosophy, and was signally realised by his marriage with a great poetess. Before meeting him, Elizabeth Barrett had been led by a false religion to believe that her father's frightful selfishness was heaven's just judgment on her for giving to an earthly object affections that God alone could rightfully claim.[1] She learned to think very differently in Italy; and the last Book of *Aurora Leigh* gives an expression of supreme eloquence to what her husband had taught before in *Colombe's Birthday* and *The Flight of the Duchess.* Tennyson, too, whose own love-match had been delayed by poverty, strikes the same note in the Poems of his second period; and his *Princess,* on the surface a manifesto against the higher education of women, seems to have been inspired by a dread that it might interfere with the rights of passion, by separating them from their

[1] See the splendid poem entitled *Confessions.*

natural companions, whereas it has resulted in a closer intimacy between the sexes than before.

The glorification of human energy on the part of historians whose dissent from the dominant religion, although complete, remained unspoken, and of human love on the part of poets who gave Christianity an ostensible support, shows how far English idealism had become estranged from the pietism of twenty years before, and how utterly the Oxford Movement had failed to recapture it for ascetic superstition. At Oxford itself a counter-movement in the direction of free inquiry had sprung up even before Newman's secession to Rome in 1845; and the younger men, of whom some had been trained by Dr. Arnold, were rapidly assimilating the results of modern German thought. Strauss's *Life of Jesus,* published in 1835, soon became known in England. A brilliant and short-lived journalist, who was also at one time a clergyman, John Sterling, still remembered from his friendship with Carlyle, seems to have finally abandoned supernaturalism on reading it. Another young clergyman who had been a disciple of Newman's, the future historian, J. A. Froude, learned from Strauss to think of all religious traditions as myths. In 1849 he published a novel called *The Nemesis of Faith,* so outspoken that it led to the resignation of his fellowship at Exeter College. More than ten years earlier a little group of men and women at Coventry, belonging to the industrial classes and brought up in the narrowest pietism, had, without any help from Germany, come to reject the Gospels as miraculous narratives.

One of them, destined hereafter to achieve a world-wide fame under the name of George Eliot, undertook to translate Strauss, and produced a masterly version of his epoch-making work in 1846.

But the writer who made the deepest mark on the rationalistic side was F. W. Newman, a younger brother of the Tractarian leader. After taking the highest honours at Oxford he had gone out to Syria as a missionary. This calling entailed on the ardent zealot a close study of the New Testament. It led him first to doubt the legitimacy of the dogmas based on Scripture, then the trustworthiness of the Scriptural record itself, then the truth and even the excellence of Christianity as a religion. His *Phases of Faith* (1850) is a detailed and sincere account of the reasonings that led him step by step to this long unwelcome conclusion.

Some months after the appearance of *Phases of Faith* W. R. Greg, a Unitarian business man and journalist of high character and intellect, brought out a work of equally destructive and more systematic character called *The Creed of Christendom,* but really directed against the Bible's claim to supernatural authority. Although a remarkably luminous summary of the arguments on that side, it did not attain any wide popularity until nearly a quarter of a century later.

In those times it was considered a great victory for Freethought that the publication of such works as Newman's and Greg's did not entail unpleasant consequences on their authors. Ten years earlier, according to Sir Charles Lyell, they would have been sent to Coventry for it. Such, indeed, had

been the fate of Froude, who was cut by one friend after another in the streets of Oxford. So late as 1842 a few impulsive words uttered at a public meeting brought a worse penalty than social ostracism on the speaker. This was the celebrated G. J. Holyoake. Lecturing on Home Colonisation at Cheltenham the year before, he had been taxed by one of the audience with leaving God out of his scheme. Holyoake replied that he did not believe in God, and that he would put the Deity on half-pay, meaning that he would like to see half the property of the Church devoted to the relief of the poor. He was tried at Gloucester Assizes for blasphemy, and condemned to six months' imprisonment. After being liberated he found means to open a bookseller's shop in London, and became the founder of Secularism. This he has defined as the moral duty of man deduced from considerations pertaining to this life alone. In the neater phrase of a disciple, "Secularism purports to regulate human affairs by considerations purely human."[1] At its first promulgation Secularism was understood by friends and foes alike to exclude all theological belief, whether Christian or simply theistic. Secularists need not be atheists, but they could hardly be more than Agnostics. Since then a tendency has gained ground among professing Christians to identify the divine with what is most characteristically human—*i.e.*, with man's higher faculties; and a philosophical theologian has gone the length of proclaiming the service of humanity as the true and only service of God.[2] But when

[1] G. W. Foote, in *Religious Systems of the World*, p. 526 (1st ed).
[2] Edward Caird, *The Evolution of Religion*, vol. ii., p. 320.

Holyoake began his Secularist propaganda such an identification had not become popular, and for many years he carried on an active campaign against the current beliefs, culminating in his *Trial of Theism* (1858), one of the ablest books ever directed against the belief in a personal God.

As a disciple of Robert Owen, Holyoake interested himself warmly in the cause of industrial co-operation; but he understood better than Owen the importance of bringing this and all other movements for the elevation of the people into line with the democratic agitation. He also adopted more openly than Owen the Malthusian principle that the prosperity of the working classes can only be secured by restraining the increase of their numbers.

The same doctrine is advocated with something like enthusiasm in Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* (1848), long accepted as an authoritative manual of the subject. Mill agreed with Malthus in regarding over-population, while it lasted, as an impassable obstacle to Socialism; but he believed that legislation directed towards raising the standard of comfort and spreading knowledge among the working classes might induce them to set a voluntary limit on the number of their children. He also spoke hopefully of the co-operative movement, although he did not think that it would ever succeed, by means of peaceful competition, in beating capitalistic production out of the field. So far his anticipations have been justified. Co-operative societies for consumption have thriven and multiplied; co-operative societies for production have on the whole failed, and the most successful have departed from their original principle by becoming

mere joint-stock companies employing labourers paid by fixed wages. Hence in collectivist circles the voluntary Socialism of Owen and his followers has been succeeded by a revival of Chartist State Socialism, advocating the expropriation of land-owners, mine-owners, and capitalists by local municipalities or by the government of the whole country.

Chartism itself came to an end as an organised movement in 1848, the great year of abortive revolutions. Some of its leaders had seriously discredited their cause by acting against the Free Traders and breaking up Anti-Corn-Law meetings. Free Trade, however, had not wrought miracles. Vast quantities of capital had been sunk in railway speculation ; this, combined with the potato-famine, produced a commercial crisis, the effect of which was widespread distress among the people. Then Chartism lifted its head once more. A petition demanding the famous Six Points received an immense number of genuine and not a few spurious signatures. Preparations were made to carry it to the House of Commons, followed by half a million persons. Government forbade the procession ; Wellington took effectual means to resist its approach by armed force ; volunteer constables contributed overwhelming numbers to the defence of order. Finally, the petition was carried to the House in a cab, referred to a Special Committee, and shown to bear only a third of the signatures boasted of by the leader of the demonstration, Feargus O'Connor.

A group of liberal clergymen and laymen, with the Rev. F. D. Maurice at their head, profoundly

touched by the prevalent distress, proposed as a remedy to substitute theological for secularist principles in an attempted reorganisation of the most insufficiently remunerated industries, and started a new scheme of co-operation under the title of Christian Socialism. But religious inspiration failed to do the work expected of it, and, after a brief struggle for existence, this well-meant effort towards a practical evangelisation of the masses collapsed.

A writer of surpassing genius who, towards the close of the century, did more than any other single individual to revive the cause of Socialism, first made his mark during this period. Born in 1817, John Ruskin received first a clerical, then an artistic training. Opinions differ as to whether he might have become a great painter; he certainly became a great master of pictorial language. Although by nature and education an egoist, for many years he devoted all his powers to the interpretation of Turner's art, finding in it a deep philosophic meaning of which the great landscape painter had never dreamed. Turner was in fact a romanticist in form and colour, who habitually reconstructed the visible aspects of nature in such a way as to make them yield imaginative and emotional effects comparable to those produced by the most energetic discharges of passion, or by the most impressive groupings of ideal experiences in the works of his great poetic contemporaries. Ruskin professed to regard the painter's wonderful creations as primarily a new revelation of natural truth, and therefore he prepared himself for his work as an art-critic and

prophet of Turner by diligently collecting all the information contemporary science could furnish about the structure and history of the visible world as a subject for pictorial representation, much as a critic of figure-painting might qualify himself for the office by a course of human anatomy. Thus his earlier writings represent in a strange combination, and carried to a high degree of intensity, the romanticism and the scientific enthusiasm which divided between them the genius of the earlier nineteenth century. With them he associated, what Turner stood aloof from, a strong religious feeling of the Evangelical type, not native, but stamped on his mind by early training and never quite effaced. His aversion from the Oxford Movement was extreme ; but the pietism he shared with its leaders inspired him, as it inspired the neo-Catholics, with a passion for Gothic architecture, for the poetry of Dante, and for the earlier Italian religious painters. Italian influences soon dissipated the narrow Puritanism of his youth. Physical science, combined at a later period with the rationality of Greek literature and Greek art, whose spirit he came more and more to appreciate, did the rest. Before completing *Modern Painters,* Ruskin had parted with all religious belief. Floating fragments of his lost creed came back to him afterwards under the influence of spiritistic delusions ; but, as a teacher of the English people, he never again went outside the furtherance of earthly happiness by the rational application of natural means to the fulfilment of human needs.

Ruskin had faults and limitations on which at the present day it would be needless and ungracious

to dwell. What it behoves us to remember is that in him England produced and possessed the greatest master of æsthetic appreciation that the world has ever seen. No other critic has shown so profound, so comprehensive, so discriminating a sense of beauty in all its forms; no other has acquired so intimate a knowledge of nature and of art; no other has been able to communicate his knowledge and appreciation of beautiful things through a style of such consummate energy, exactness, and sweep, or so imposing in the magnificence of its decorative effect. What England at the present day would have been without him is too dismal for fancy to conjecture; too remote for imagination to realise what his transmitted influence will make of the England that is yet to be.

MODERN ENGLAND

A RECORD OF OPINION AND ACTION FROM THE TIME OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION TO THE PRESENT DAY

BY

ALFRED WILLIAM BENN

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IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II

[ISSUED FOR THE RATIONALIST PRESS ASSOCIATION, LTD.]

LONDON:

WATTS & CO.,

17, JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET STREET, E.C.

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Chapter X.

THE PUPILS OF CANNING

The fall of Sir Robert Peel's Ministry made little difference in the domestic policy of the English Government. The general principle of Free Trade received some further applications, and the freedom of the manufacturers to overwork their hands some further restrictions. Vindictive country gentlemen ceased to oppose Irish Coercion Bills that gave them no opportunity of shooting their lost leader from behind a hedge. What really made Russell's Administration differ from Peel's was the substitution of Lord Palmerston for Lord Aberdeen at the Foreign Office. The Minister who opened Mazzini's letters, and who is more than suspected of using the information thus obtained to warn Italy's oppressors of an approaching attempt to overthrow their power, was succeeded by the Minister whom Italian patriots regarded as their friend and champion. Aberdeen justified his conduct on the plea that an Italian revolution would have endangered the peace of Europe. In this nervous anxiety to preserve the *status quo* he differed widely from the imperious statesman whose policy had so nearly led to a European war seven years before. The change of Ministers initiated a series of events that subsequently transformed the face of Europe.

Bred in Canning's school, Palmerston, like

Canning, kept in view the double object of encouraging liberty and of promoting English interests abroad. Indeed, the two objects were closely connected, for a free people—especially one indebted for its freedom to England—would be less likely than an enslaved people to let itself be dragged into a war against her at the bidding of a great and ambitious military power. It might even on occasion become our ally. Besides, Palmerston, who had sat at the feet of Dugald Stewart, and whose recollections of the Terror were less vivid than those of the anti-Jacobin poet, probably loved liberty as such more genuinely than ever was possible to Canning.

Palmerston's high-handed Eastern policy had achieved in 1840 a complete diplomatic victory over France. Henceforth the French King and his Minister Guizot were systematically identified by the French Opposition writers and speakers with the principle of peace at any price. This reproach ultimately proved their ruin. To soothe French vanity they brought back Napoleon's body from St. Helena, and buried it with great pomp under the dome of the Invalides. But this vain pageant merely went to heighten the painful contrast between the glories of the Empire and the sordid bourgeois government of Louis Philippe. Then advantage was taken of the troubles in Spain to re-establish French ascendancy over the sister Bourbon kingdom. An intrigue was set on foot, and carried to an apparently successful issue, whose object was to secure the Spanish throne for an eventual descendant of Louis Philippe. One of his sons, the Duc de Montpensier, was married to

the sister and heir presumptive of the young Queen Isabella, while the Queen herself was married to her cousin, Don Francisco, by whom it was known that she could not have children. This arrangement was effected in direct violation of a previous agreement with England that Montpensier should not marry the Infanta until the Queen was married and had heirs. Possibly Guizot might have kept his word had Lord Aberdeen remained in office. His excuse is the alleged determination of Palmerston to marry Isabella to a Coburg Prince. Nothing can palliate the infamy of imposing such a husband as Don Francisco on the young Queen; but, justifiable or not, the Spanish marriages put an end to the *entente cordiale* established by Aberdeen, thus placing a powerful weapon in the hands of the French Opposition, who reproached Guizot and his master with sacrificing the friendship of England to the interests of the Orleans family.

In another way the unfortunate Louis Philippe's desire for peace hurried on his fall. At that time only 200,000 Frenchmen possessed the electoral franchise. As a consequence of this restriction, government was carried on by a system of gross corruption, frequently giving rise to open scandals. Extension of the suffrage became a watchword with the Liberal Opposition. A very moderate concession, amounting to the admission of 200,000 new electors, would have satisfied their demands. But so convinced were the King and Guizot of the popular craving for war that they refused to strengthen the representation of public opinion in the Chamber even to that trifling extent. In February, 1848, a Reform banquet was forbidden.

The people of Paris rose in arms; the National Guard showed signs of defection; Guizot resigned; the King fled, and a Republic was proclaimed.

France has been credited with the whole European Revolution of 1848, and no doubt her example greatly stimulated the movement; but in fact it had begun more than a month before, at Palermo, and had spread over the whole of Italy while Paris still lay quiescent. Pius IX., elected Pope in June, 1846, had given the first signal for reform, his accession exactly coinciding with the return of the English Liberals to office. Opposed by Austria, he expresses a wish to the English Government "to have the assistance of some person of rank and experience who might aid him by advice, and at the same time afford him the moral support of England."[1] A Whig nobleman, Lord Minto, is sent out for the purpose, with directions to visit Turin and Florence on the way, with a view to strengthening "the authority of the constitutional Governments in Italy."[2] Palmerston's instructions to this travelling agent express a strong disapproval of Austria's threatened interference with the new reforming movement. At the same time Palmerston was holding back France and Austria from forcibly interfering to help the Catholic and Jesuit-ruled cantons of Switzerland against the Federal Government. That his help, there or elsewhere, would have gone beyond words is unlikely, and he always counselled moderation to the revolutionary leaders

[1] Evelyn Ashley, *Life of Lord Palmerston,* vol. i., p. 33.
[2] *Ibid,* p. 34.

as well as to the kings. But with the credulous and excitable peoples of Southern Europe words told like gun-shots; and England probably repaid to Europe in 1848 more than her own Reform agitation owed to France in 1830.

From the beginning French democracy had been doubly compromised, by the support of the Socialists and by the support of the priests. A movement like Robert Owen's for putting co-operators in the place of capitalists had become confounded with a movement like that of the Chartists for confiscating the property of the rich. A terror more deadly than that once inspired by the guillotine took hold of the *bourgeoisie* and the peasants, and drove them to seek protection from the army and the Church. It soon became evident that political liberty could not yet co-exist with universal suffrage in France. Practically the only question was whether absolute power should be exercised by the heir of Charles X. or by the heir of Napoleon. A popular vote decided in favour of the Bonapartist candidate, Prince Louis Napoleon, who was elected President of the Republic. He had secured the support of the priests by promising to reinstate Pope Pius IX. in the temporal sovereignty of Rome, whence he had been driven, on failing as a reformer, by the Italian revolutionists. After a waiting game of three years the Prince-President used the army to destroy what little remained of French liberty. A so-called plebiscite condoned the treacherous and sanguinary means by which he had seized on despotic power, and in another year another

plebiscite made him Emperor under the title of Napoleon III.

Writing under Louis Philippe, an observer who studied and knew French society as no one else has ever known it, the great novelist Balzac, declared that absolutism would be the only cure for the prevalent corruption; and the greatest of French philosophers, Auguste Comte, hailed Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état* as a necessary and wholesome measure. Nevertheless, the author of that deed remains the most sinister figure in modern history. Most persons who retain any belief in public morality will agree with John Austin that "the man was a scoundrel," and will sympathise with Mr. Swinburne's wish to see him "kick heels with his throat in a rope." That his success saved France from civil war or from a Bourbon restoration can make no difference in our judgment on the atrocity of his crimes until it has been shown that no other means were available for that end.

Palmerston's foreign policy had been a necessary antecedent in the chain of events that led up to the Second Empire; and the *coup d'état* in its turn determined the rest of his career. Long used to the exercise of despotic authority in his own department, the Foreign Secretary roused the displeasure of Cabinet and Court by taking important decisions without reference to the wishes either of his colleagues or of the Queen and her Consort. Disbelieving in a French Republic, hating the Bourbons, and rejoicing in whatever insured their exclusion from the throne of France, he heard with satisfaction of what had been done on December

2, 1851, and frankly expressed his opinion in private conversation with the French Ambassador in London. Russell, who was Prime Minister, had gone as far; but advantage was taken of the Foreign Secretary's more responsible position to make the alleged indiscretion a pretext for driving him from office.

In a few weeks he had his revenge, and the same event gave occasion for it that had caused his fall. Many people in England feared that the new Napoleon would signalise his advent by waging a war of reprisals on his uncle's most inveterate enemy. It was thought that steam had bridged the Channel, and that an invading army might be expected to land any day without a previous declaration of hostilities. No armed force existed fit to cope with such an assailant, and a cry arose for providing some means of defence. For this purpose Russell proposed to reconstitute what was called the local militia. Palmerston moved an amendment to omit the word "local," "so as to constitute a regular militia which should be transportable all over the kingdom, and so be ready for any emergency,"[1] and carried it by eleven votes. Russell resigned, and was succeeded by a Protectionist Government, with Lord Derby at its head and Disraeli as his lieutenant in the Commons. Disraeli soon exhibited his unscrupulous versatility by declaring for Free Trade; but this apostasy did not save his party from defeat at the General Election of 1852, which resulted in the return of a slightly diminished Liberal majority. Defeated on

[1] Ashley, *Life of Palmerston,* vol. i., p. 333.

their Budget, the Conservatives resigned, and were succeeded by a Coalition Ministry composed of Whigs and Conservative Free Traders, or Peelites, as they were then called, under Lord Aberdeen as Prime Minister, Gladstone for the first time holding high office as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Palmerston went to the Home Office, where it was thought he would do no harm. This peculiar arrangement, as by the fatality of a Greek drama, brought on the Crimean War.

No mistake could have been greater than to suppose that the new French Emperor would attempt either to avenge or to emulate his uncle. Napoleon III. shaped his course on the simple principle of continuing the policy of his predecessor where it had been fortunate, and reversing it where it had been unlucky. France had entered on a wonderful career of material progress under Louis Philippe, and so everything was done to further her prosperity under the new Empire. Free speech had bred revolution; it ceased to exist. The priests had been alienated; education now passed for all practical purposes under their exclusive control. Above all, France had found herself isolated in Europe, and had got the reputation of being afraid to fight. She must therefore reassert her claims to respect, if possible in alliance with other Powers, but especially in alliance with England, resuming the *entente cordiale* which had benefited Louis Philippe so much, and avoiding a provocation like the Spanish marriages, which had cost him so dear.

An opportunity for carrying this policy into

effect presented itself before long. Simultaneously with the re-establishment of the Empire, on the strength of an obsolete treaty, and under strong pressure from the French Government, certain privileges connected with the Holy Places in Palestine were transferred by the Sultan from the Greek to the Latin priests. The Czar Nicholas took this for what it was probably intended to be—a personal provocation. He immediately advanced troops towards the Turkish frontier, and demanded in terms of studied insolence a Protectorate over all the Greek subjects of the Porte. Till then England had remained unconcerned in the quarrel. She now intervened, and henceforth took a foremost place in resisting claims which, had they been allowed, would have made the Sultan a vassal of the Czar. Our Government had the more reason to suspect such a design, as it had already received overtures from Nicholas amounting to a proposal for the partition of the Turkish Empire.

Our former Ambassador at Constantinople, Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, himself a Canning, trained in the same school as Palmerston and long his close political ally, was sent on a special mission to cope with the new situation. He encouraged the Sultan to resist Russia's claims, and greatly simplified matters by arranging an amicable settlement of the dispute about the Holy Places. Mentschikoff, the Czar's envoy, then repeated his master's demand for a Protectorate in a modified form. By Stratford's advice it was rejected, whereupon Nicholas gave orders for the occupation of the Danubian Principalities by a Russian Army. The great Powers then intervened, and nearly succeeded

in forcing Turkey to accept an arrangement which, in substance, if not in form, would have amounted to the concession of a Russian Protectorate over her Greek Christian subjects. At a hint, as is supposed, from Lord Stratford, the Sultan's Ministers declined to go beyond a promise to confirm existing treaties, and, on the Czar's refusal to evacuate the Principalities, declared war.

Napoleon III. has been accused of breaking up the European Concert, engaging France and England in a separate alliance, and acting on a deliberate system of provocation which ultimately made it impossible for Nicholas to accept a peaceful solution of the Eastern Question. But this seems to be a mistake. For that very arrangement known to history as the Vienna Note, propounded by the Powers, accepted by Russia, and rejected by Turkey, was, in fact, drawn up by Napoleon himself,[1] while the sole power that backed up Turkey in rejecting it was England—that is, the war-party in the English Cabinet, led by Russell and Palmerston, who eventually brought over the pacific Premier, Aberdeen, to their views.

Russell counted only in the Cabinet and the House of Commons. Palmerston represented the public opinion of the country. England had not forgotten the events of 1849, when the European revolution, with which she warmly sympathised as an attempt to copy her own institutions, had been so mercilessly suppressed. Now, while it was Austria that held in bondage the two nationalities towards which English sympathies were most

[1] P. de la Gorce, *Histoire du Second Empire,* vol. i., p. 187.

attracted, Italy and Hungary, it was Russia that, by intervening against the victorious Hungarian armies just when they had won national independence, re-cemented the whole fabric of Hapsburg tyranny tottering to its fall. So violent was the indignation excited that J. S. Mill, writing ten years afterwards, declared that for England to have helped Hungary would have been "an honourable and virtuous act," and for England and France acting together even a politic act, as it would have saved them from fighting Russia in less advantageous circumstances subsequently.[1]

Nor was this all. After their final defeat some thousands of proscribed Hungarian patriots had taken refuge in Turkish territory. Austria and Russia simultaneously demanded their surrender. By Stratford Canning's advice the Porte refused, and Palmerston sent a fleet up to the Dardanelles to support it. Thus the Turks came to be regarded, not only as brave men fighting for their own independence, but as champions of European freedom.

Again, a certain philosophy of history current at that time, and by no means yet extinct, taught that the world, to its great detriment, tends periodically to fall under the sway of a universal monarchy, the Babylonian Empire being the first recorded instance and the Roman Empire the last. Since then several attempts have been made to revive the system of universal domination—by the mediæval Popes, by Philip II., by Louis XIV., and by Napoleon; but all were baffled, as the English people believed,

[1] Mill, *Dissertations and Discussions*, vol. iii., p. 177.

almost entirely by English vigilance and courage. For many years past an apprehension had been gaining ground that Russia was preparing to play the old game over again—had, indeed, been playing it with such success that her work might be considered as half done. Sweden, Poland, Turkey were partially devoured, Austria and Prussia reduced to vassalage, India and China threatened, the United States made a fawning sycophant. Ought not England once more to fulfil her historic mission and strike down the Colossus with the feet of clay?

According to another philosophy of history, the civilised nations were periodically overwhelmed, and always threatened, by inundations of northern barbarism. Rome had succumbed to the Goths and Vandals, China to the Tartars; mediæval Christendom narrowly escaped being crushed by Genghis Khan. Popular ethnology classed the Russians as Mongols, descended in some way from the hordes of Attila, and destined to spread the same devastation over Europe unless prompt and energetic means were taken to restrain their encroachments. Some fatalists thought resistance useless; but the majority were not of that opinion.

Lord Palmerston was not a philosophic historian, but he had been bred up to believe in the Balance of Power; he thought that Russia, in possession of Constantinople, would be a danger at once to the future liberties of Europe, to British trade in the Levant, and, more remotely, to British empire in India. Probably he calculated that, having to fight her sooner or later, it would be safer to fight now, with France as our ally and the German

Powers neutral, than at some future time in less favourable circumstances.

It seems, therefore, that now as afterwards in three great crises of European policy Napoleon III. found himself duped by a more astute politician than himself; that Palmerston manœuvred him into the Russian war of 1854, as Cavour was to manœuvre him into the ultimately ruinous Italian war of 1859, and Bismarck into the fatal neutrality of 1866 and into the annihilating ambush of 1870. In return for being made the tool of England's policy he got the recognition of Queen Victoria for himself and for the fair adventuress who shared his throne, as her equals and her friends.

Had Palmerston been Prime Minister, or even Foreign Minister, his warlike attitude, supported as it was by the French Government, might have averted war. But the known peace principles of Lord Aberdeen and of his chief lieutenant, Gladstone, effectually screened the guiding hand of the Home Secretary. Similarly, the passionate desire of the English people to strike down the destroyer of European liberty was screened behind their more ostentatious exultation in the triumph of peace and industry recently signalised by the Great Exhibition of 1851, the more so because the Free Trade leaders, Cobden and Bright, now eloquently advocated the cause of non-interference.

Turkey's declaration of war was followed by an advance of the English and French fleets to Constantinople, ordered at the suggestion of Napoleon III., with Palmerston's full approval. Russia, in perfect conformity with her rights as

a belligerent, replied by destroying the Turkish squadron at Sinope. Then, again under pressure from the French Emperor, the allied fleets received orders to advance into the Black Sea, and to drive all Russian ships back into port. This step involved a breach of international treaties; it amounted to a beginning of hostilities, and did actually bring on war. It had been approved of during the temporary retirement of Palmerston, who, for reasons not yet explained, had left the Ministry. But his absence told for more than his presence, if we are to believe what Kinglake supposes, that "the very apprehension of having him for an adversary weighed heavily on the decision of his late colleagues."[1] In a few days he had returned to office, stronger than before.

By their aggressive action in the Black Sea England and France separated themselves from the German Powers, and so exasperated the Czar that he disregarded their summons to evacuate the Danubian Principalities, and war ensued. It need not have lasted long, for, under pressure from Austria, the Russian troops soon afterwards recrossed the Pruth, their place being taken by an Austrian army of occupation. This, however, did not satisfy the allied Western Powers. Unwilling to bring back their fleets and armies without striking a great blow, and believing the present to be a unique opportunity for crippling their enemy, they resolved to invade the Crimea, to sink the Russian fleet, and to destroy the great fortress of Sebastopol, by which Constantinople was permanently

[1] *Invasion of the Crimea,* vol. ii., p. 27.

threatened. It is said that the idea of a Crimean expedition first originated with Napoleon III., but only acquired fixity when taken hold of by Palmerston's more energetic will.

Under more efficient leadership, the purpose of the Allies would have been accomplished a few weeks after their united forces were disembarked in the neighbourhood of the great Russian fortress. As it was, they succeeded; and, although untoward circumstances postponed the fall of Sebastopol for nearly a year, politically the delay proved no misfortune, for that long struggle ended with the complete exhaustion of Russia, the loss of her military prestige, and her exclusion from all share in the rearrangement of the Western world. Palmerston's dream of a regenerated Turkey—not shared by the better-informed Stratford de Redcliffe—led, indeed, only to more misgovernment, waste, and misery; but the embryo nationalities of the Balkan Peninsula have gained in the long run by an intervention which has ultimately secured them a larger autonomy than would have been compatible with their incorporation in the empire of the Czar.

Such were some of the ulterior effects of the Crimean War. Its immediate effect on home politics was to lay bare the gross inefficiency of our aristocratically organised administration. Military maladministration was no new thing; it had raged through the French War. The new thing was its speedy exposure, due in this instance to the *Times* correspondent in the Crimea, the late Sir William Russell. Popular indignation turned itself, in the first instance, not against the faulty system, but against the Government of Lord Aberdeen, which

resigned after a vote of censure in the House of Commons. Palmerston, the national choice, succeeded Aberdeen as Premier; and, after a little delay, the whole Peelite section of the Cabinet followed its chief, leaving the more warlike Whigs in sole possession of power.

Among the seceders was W. E. Gladstone, already at that time, "without dispute and beyond rivalry, the first man in the House of Commons."[1] Some months later he advocated granting peace to Russia on terms less onerous than those accepted by her after the fall of Sebastopol. It so happened that a few years before these events, in the course of an Italian journey, Gladstone's attention had been drawn to the frightful way in which the Neapolitan Liberals were treated by their Sovereign, King Ferdinand, 20,000 of them being kept in dungeons as political prisoners. Among others, Carlo Poerio, who had been Minister of Public Instruction under the Liberal Government of 1848, was found "chained to a murderer, and suffering terrible privations."[2] Gladstone exposed this state of things to all Europe in a pamphlet which, though it did not procure the liberation of the sufferers—they were only released in April, 1859—ultimately contributed to the independence and unification of Italy. But apparently he did not grasp the solidarity of interests linking Bourbon tyranny with Russian power. Yet the connection seemed obvious enough, and was pressed on his

[1] *The National Review*, vol i., p. 423 (1855).

[2] Herbert Paul, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, Supplement, vol. ii., p. 285. Mr. Paul erroneously gives the date of Poerio's release as 1852.

notice by a candid friend in a new organ of public opinion just then beginning to appear.[1]

Already, indeed, the greatest of Italian statesmen had caught this connection, and had begun to utilise the war against Russia for the benefit of Italian independence. In April, 1855, Count Cavour sent 15,000 Piedmontese troops to the assistance of the Allies in the Crimea, placing them under the orders of the English general. They took part in the last battle fought before Sebastopol fell; and, although on that occasion the French did nearly everything, the Italians were allowed to claim far more than their proportionate share of the honours of victory. A Catholic orator, Montalembert, denounced in the French *Corps Legislatif* the danger to European Conservatism of this alliance with Austria's revolutionary enemy, but his warnings passed unheeded.[2] In the Congress held at Paris in 1856 to arrange a Treaty of Peace, Cavour sat officially as the representative of Sardinia, virtually as the representative of all Italy. He took advantage of his position to bring Italy's wrongs before Europe; Count Walewski and Lord Clarendon, the French and English Plenipotentiaries, supported his attack on Austria; and, although nothing came of it at the moment, a deep impression remained that something must be done for Italy, and that the Powers which had overthrown Russia were her friends.

While in Europe England had shone for fifty

[1] *National Review, ut supra,* pp. 427–28. The article is evidently by R. H. Hutton.

[2] De la Gorce, *Histoire du Second Empire,* vol. i., p. 376.

years as the champion of right and liberty against oppression, England as an Asiatic Power continued to appear in a somewhat less favourable light. At the close of the Crimean War we find her attacking Persia, in pursuance of a quarrel for which her own Minister at Tehran was chiefly responsible. Before the conclusion of this discreditable affair our agents at Hong Kong committed a much worse outrage on Chinese rights. A certain vessel called the *Arrow*, belonging to a Chinese merchant and manned by Chinese sailors, had, with doubtful propriety, been authorised to fly the British flag. This privilege, whatever its justification, had been merely temporary; and ten days after its expiry Chinese officials boarded the *Arrow* and took away her crew, on the plea that some of them had been guilty of piracy. Sir John Bowring, the Governor of Hong Kong, demanded their surrender, and, on its being refused, the forts guarding the approaches to Canton were attacked and taken. Yeh, the Chinese Commissioner, then restored the crew, but demanded that those accused of piracy should be given up to Chinese justice, besides refusing to apologise for his proceedings. Then came fresh claims and further hostilities, Bowring's whole attitude being apparently modelled on the behaviour of Russia to Turkey, which had recently excited so much indignation in English breasts.

It excited some indignation even when the bully happened to be an Englishman. Palmerston, who made a rule of backing up his agents whether right or wrong, defended Bowring ; but a vote of censure moved by Cobden and supported by Russell, Gladstone, Disraeli, and the whole Conservative

party, passed the House of Commons by sixteen votes, Charles Greville, a rather cynical man of the world, "rejoicing, for the honour of the country, that it had condemned this iniquitous case."[1] The country, however, held a different view of its honour, and, on an appeal to its judgment, gave a triumphant majority to the policy of the popular Minister; the leading advocates of peace, Cobden, Bright, W. J. Fox, and Milner Gibson, who had also headed the Anti-Corn-Law movement, all losing their seats. In the war subsequently carried on with varying fortune, until the final submission of the Chinese in 1860 to the united forces of England and France, we had just complaints to make of their cruel and treacherous conduct. By way, it is to be supposed, of civilising them, the treaty of peace provided that the opium traffic should thenceforth be legalised, and that the duty on it should be fixed at ten instead of twenty per cent., the rate which the Chinese Government vainly entreated us to permit.

Our differences with China would have been settled sooner but for the diversion of the forces first intended for service in that quarter to meet the more pressing necessities of India. So denuded indeed was India of European soldiers, owing to the requirements of the Crimea, that, but for their timely help, a formidable mutiny, which had broken out in the East India Company's Native Bengal army, might have necessitated the entire reconquest of the Peninsula. Discontent had for some time been growing. A policy of territorial aggrandisement, pursued by a series of Governors-General,

[1] *The Greville Memoirs,* Part III., vol. ii., p. 95.

culminated in Lord Dalhousie's annexation of Oudh, against treaty obligations, and on grounds that would equally have justified the Czar in seizing on Constantinople. And the extension of our sway had become associated with the suspicion of designs against the religion of the people. It had been part of the policy pursued by the East India Company in the eighteenth century strictly to forbid any approach to Christian proselytism among the Hindoos. But the Evangelical movement, manifested among other forms by a vast increase of missionary activity, had led first to the establishment of an ecclesiastical organisation to meet the spiritual needs of the civil and military establishment, and then to direct efforts, in which even some officers took part, to spread Christianity among the natives.

Matters came to a crisis when, by an act of stupid official negligence, cartridges were served out to the Sepoys, greased with a mixture of cow's and swine's fat. Before using the cartridges, their ends had to be bitten off. Now, for a Hindoo to put either cow's or swine's fat into his mouth involved loss of caste in the present life, and eternal damnation in the life to come; while defilement with pig's fat alone would render a Mohammedan liable to no less serious penalties. A rumour spread and obtained universal credence that the greased cartridges were designed for the express purpose of destroying the soldiers' caste, and compelling them to embrace Christianity. It would have been difficult to disabuse the Sepoys of this belief without having recourse to arguments which might have been turned with fatal

effect against the doctrine of Original Sin as then held by nearly every adherent of the creed it was thought so desirable for them to embrace.

After simmering for five months, discontent turned to mutiny and massacre in May, 1857. Oudh, so unjustly seized, proved the focus of disturbance and disaster. John Lawrence saved the Punjaub, and native troops from the Punjaub saved India. Colin Campbell, arriving with reinforcements from England, completed the work of restoring order, and in a year from its beginning the Mutiny was over. Lord Canning, the Governor-General, a son of the great Minister, showed, perhaps, less promptness of decision than the situation demanded; but his courage was unshaken, his confidence wisely bestowed, and his mercifulness, amid a storm of vindictive passion, inflexibly maintained.

Throughout the whole of this tragic episode one is struck by the great superiority in ability and efficiency of the Indian over the English administration, due, no doubt, to its being less hampered by the survival of mediæval institutions. It is worth noting that not one of the three great men just mentioned belonged by birth to the aristocratic caste. Lawrence's father was colonel in a marching regiment; Colin Campbell's father was a Scotch carpenter; while the statesman from whose widow Canning inherited his peerage had been stigmatised as an adventurer by high-born Whigs and Tories alike. Finally, he whom public opinion singled out as the fighting hero of the whole war, Havelock, was the son of a Sunderland shipbuilder. People observed with a mixture of amusement and

indignation that the same *Gazette* where Havelock's promotion to the rank of K.C.B. appeared announced the bestowal of the same honour on a certain courtier named Phipps, a relation of Lord Normanby, popularly supposed to have earned it by his zeal in supplying the Queen with entertaining gossip from the newspapers.

In view of such facts, it might seem no gain, at least for India, that the Mutiny led to a transfer of authority from the East India Company to the Crown. But while the conduct of Indian affairs on relatively rational principles does not seem to have suffered, but the contrary, from a revolution less momentous in reality than in appearance, the State as a whole has gained. As a consequence of the Mutiny, the contingent of European troops in the Indian Army has been considerably augmented, thus affording enlarged opportunities of military training and experience to English officers. And, what is equally important for East and West, the transference of India to the Crown, or, in other words, to the complete control of our elected Parliamentary Government, has carried with it the transference of appointments in the Indian Civil Service from interest to ability. It had been a part of Macaulay's reconstitution of the Indian Government that its Civil Service should be opened to the public by means of competitive examinations. But this provision had been allowed to remain dormant, and, although re-enacted in 1853, was now for the first time, at J. S. Mill's recommendation, fully enforced.[1] Under the stress of Indian example,

[1] Molesworth, *History of England,* vol. iii., p. 142.

the same principle soon extended itself to the English Civil Service, to the scientific army services, and finally to the whole army.

Whatever importance may belong to the reaction of Asiatic interests on the policy and public opinion of England, the influence exercised by Continental affairs counted for much more. We have seen how the Crimean War arose as an indirect consequence from English sympathy with the unsuccessful revolutions of 1848, and from the change of dynasty brought about in France by the events of that year. Italian liberty, made possible once more by the ruin of Russia's European domination, now took the place of the Eastern Question as the centre of European interest and the determining antecedent of all further political progress.

Italy numbered more sympathisers in England than anywhere else. Many English travellers had carried home happy memories of her cities, mountains, and seashores; others had made her a second home, and had intermarried with her people. Italian refugees found England their safest European asylum; it was not forgotten that Bentinck had given Sicily a free constitution in 1812; quite recently Palmerston had sided with the national movement of 1848. Both countries had even a common enemy in the Papacy, although the causes of their hostility differed widely enough. A year after his restoration to the temporal sovereignty of Rome by French bayonets, Pius IX. had thought fit to divide England and Wales into twelve Bishoprics, with the celebrated Dr. Wiseman (the original of Browning's Bishop Blougram), as

Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, at their head. There were at that time considerably under a million Roman Catholics in England, mostly Irish or of Irish parentage, and the new episcopate seemed rather in excess of their spiritual requirements. But the secessions from Protestantism to Rome that followed the decline of the Tractarian movement, although a vanishing quantity as compared with the total population, seemed numerous enough to justify the credulous ecclesiastical imagination in hoping for conversions on a larger scale in the near future. Anyhow, the Papal Brief creating the new episcopal organisation described it as a measure for "re-establishing and extending the Catholic faith in England."[1] Even so, however, English Protestants, with their innumerable missions for converting the world in general and Roman Catholics in particular to what they called the pure Gospel, should have been the very last religious body to complain of similar proceedings when adopted, without the slightest attempt at concealment or constraint, to win them over to what a majority of Christians considered the only true faith. And if, as they alleged, their own religion rested on reason, it had nothing to fear from the unaided show of authority among such a reasonable people as the English were supposed to be. But in fact the current Biblicism had no such basis; it rested, like the rival creed, merely on authority and prescription; it had been established by force at the Reformation, and it quivered to the centre when challenged by a more imperious

[1] Walpole, *History of England,* vol. v., p. 421.

voice than any that its accredited representatives could raise in reply.

Probably the Whigs, who then ruled England, if they had fallen back from the complete religious unbelief of Holland House, looked in their hearts on all additions to pure Deism as so much superstition. Publicly they went some length in the Liberal direction. We have seen how Lord John Russell made Hampden a Bishop in spite of a protest signed by half the episcopate. Palmerston, as Home Secretary, at a time when cholera was raging, replied to an application from the Edinburgh Presbytery for the appointment of a national fast by suggesting that appropriate measures of sanitation would furnish a more efficacious check to the ravages of the disease; and he subsequently gave great scandal to the whole Evangelical party by informing a labourers' meeting that "all children were born good."[1]

Party leaders so scornful of superstition in general were particularly impatient of superstition when it appeared under an anti-national form. Lord John took the opportunity of combining the Pope and the Puseyite clergy in a common denunciation addressed to the Bishop of Durham. Amid much confusion he brought in a Bill forbidding the assumption of territorial titles by the Pope's new Bishops, and annulling all gifts or bequests made to them under such titles. The second provision, which alone mattered, had to be withdrawn. The first provision became law, but was never obeyed, and has since been repealed. Ministers and people

[1] Ashley, *Life of Palmerston,* vol. ii., p. 15.

covered themselves with ridicule, while Cardinal Wiseman kept up his dignity throughout. But a feeling of soreness remained, and England became more the friend of Italy than ever from having been involved in a discreditable conflict with their common enemy, the Pope.

Cavour would have preferred an English to a French alliance, but in the circumstances it was totally impossible; Austria could more easily have supported the Sepoy Mutiny than we could have sent an army to Lombardy. Napoleon III. hesitated long, and might never have made up his mind had it not been made up for him by Italian assassins. As the imperial pair were driving to the Paris Opera on the evening of January 14, 1858, bombs thrown by Orsini, a Roman exile, and some accomplices exploded under their carriage, killing and wounding 156 persons. Neither the Emperor nor the Empress was hurt; but the purpose of the attack was better secured by their escape than by their death. Orsini, while awaiting his doom, wrote to Louis Napoleon, whose companion in arms he had once been, entreating him to free Italy; and an appeal backed by such terrible arguments did not pass unheeded.

Orsini's attempt had been prepared and his bombs manufactured in London. The French Government asked for new legislation imposing severer penalties on the plotting of such outrages for the future. This seemed a reasonable request, and Palmerston proposed to meet it by a Bill making conspiracy to commit murder either within or without the United Kingdom punishable by

imprisonment for life.[1] Unfortunately for him, some hot-headed French colonels had used language suggesting recourse to armed invasion if their master's enemies continued to find shelter and impunity within our shores, and their angry addresses had received a sort of official sanction by being printed in the *Moniteur*. Lord John Russell and the Radicals opposed the second reading of the Conspiracy Bill on the ground that the laws of England should not be changed at the dictation of a foreign despot. It is said that Lord Derby, watching the debate from the gallery of the House of Commons, saw the unique opportunity of putting his rival in a minority, and sent down orders to the Conservatives to join the Liberal malcontents in defeating a measure of which both he and they entirely approved. The country gentlemen of England did as they were commanded; the Bill was lost by a majority of nineteen; Palmerston resigned, and Derby took his place. A trick that would have ruined any man's reputation on the racecourse put him and his party in office; but their tenure of it was insecure from the beginning, nor did it long continue.

As has been already observed, Orsini's bombs did their work more effectually by failure than they could have done it by success. In fear of a fresh attempt on his life, Napoleon III. arranged a secret meeting with Cavour at Plombières, where a plan for the expulsion of Austria from Italy by the united forces of France and Piedmont was concerted. Lombardy, Venice, and some other

[1] Walpole, *History of Twenty-five Years*, vol. i., p. 118.

territories were to be united with the Sardinian dominions into a North Italian kingdom, while Savoy and perhaps Nice were to be ceded to France. In pursuance of this programme Austria was goaded into declaring war in the following April, and almost on the same day the English Parliament was dissolved, a decisive opportunity being thus afforded to our people for showing on which side their sympathies lay; for, although the appeal was made on a question of purely domestic policy, it was practically decided by reference to the great crisis in foreign affairs.

Ten years of Chartist agitation had left behind an impression that the people were imperfectly represented. There were fewer working-men's constituencies than under the unreformed Parliament; and the supremacy of the middle classes remained much less complete than had been intended and expected in 1832. It seemed unjust that so many Englishmen should be excluded from the suffrage; nor was that the only evil complained of. Had the million voters been distributed among constituencies of approximately equal numerical strength, their representatives might have given a fairly adequate expression to the public opinion of the country. But so far was this just arrangement from being realised that a fifth of the electorate actually returned a majority of the House, the difference of voting values being sometimes as thirty to one, according to the population of the boroughs in which they were cast.

Nor was the variation a mere arithmetical curiosity of no political significance. Voters in

small constituencies were much more amenable to the influences of rank and wealth than voters in large ones; they could be more easily bribed or bullied into returning a plutocrat or a territorial magnate; while again the persons who so obtained seats in the Legislature used their power to thwart all attempts at an equitable readjustment of taxation, and to support an administrative system which threw the public service into the hands of the titled class or of their nominees.

Another evil, less noticed at the time, was the loss of legislative power caused by the tendency of parties towards a Parliamentary equilibrium. We saw how a somewhat similar state of things had become permanent in the unreformed Parliament, and how it made for utter legislative stagnation, as no Government could afford to alienate groups of members interested in the support of any particular abuse. Since the fall of Sir Robert Peel there had been, in name at least, a permanent Liberal majority, but it consisted of four different sections —Whig, Radical, Peelite, and Irish Catholic— between which it was Disraeli's policy to be always driving wedges, without any particular scruple as to the measures he advocated, opposed, or surrendered; while the art of the Liberal leaders lay in keeping them together by judicious management, in winning Opposition support by concessions to Conservative prejudices, or in bringing outside opinion to bear on the whole House by an ostentatiously national policy.

Finally, the settlement of 1832, while it made the ruling Chamber an organ of middle-class opinion, by the very act of conferring sovereignty on the

middle class, made the administrative power an almost exclusively aristocratic privilege. In advocating a wide democratic suffrage, James Mill had foretold that the poorer classes would bestow their confidence on the middle class, whom they had always taken for models and advisers; he may not have observed that the middle class in turn was similarly disposed to imitate and confide in the aristocracy. Anyhow, such had proved to be the law of English society; and the preference given to titled persons for posts in the administration manifested itself more especially under Whig Governments, so that Whig and oligarch became almost convertible terms; at any rate, both Tories and Radicals combined to foster that belief. In practice, however, the difference between Whigs and Tories merely amounted to this, that statesmen sprung from the middle class, like Canning, Huskisson, Peel, Gladstone, and Disraeli, found a more open field for their talents in a party which, as J. S. Mill observed, was by the law of its existence the stupidest—and he might have added the laziest—than among that which included the ablest, the most energetic, and the most ambitious of those born to hereditary wealth.

The first Reform agitation had been headed by Whig nobles; the Free Trade agitation had brought to the front gifted middle-class leaders who had learned to look on the territorial aristocracy, whether Whig or Tory, as monopolists who deliberately starved the people and obstructed the development of manufacturing industry for the express and avowed purpose of keeping wealth and power in their own exclusive possession. Regarding

them thus as natural enemies, their hostility did not cease with the abolition of the Corn Laws, but led to an exposure of the abuses which, as was alleged, were inseparable from a titled administration, and would be remedied by thorough-going democracy. What the new Radicals wanted was less to give the people power than to take power away from the oligarchy of inherited wealth, and to transfer it to an aristocracy of industrial ability, hating war as a source of expenditure and an interruption to trade, besides being directly productive of pain, disease, and death. And they thought that by giving votes to the working classes, together with the ballot and a sweeping redistribution of seats, this object would be secured.

Lord John Russell was the first statesman to take up Parliamentary Reform after the collapse of Chartism in 1848. In 1852, and again in 1854, he introduced Bills of which the second, at least, would have enfranchised a large section of the working-classes and considerably diminished the number of small boroughs. His object was probably rather to increase the Parliamentary strength of moderate Liberalism than to gain power for passing Radical measures. On neither occasion did he receive any support either within or without the House. But the value of Reform as a card in the game of party politics came before long to be recognised, and it was periodically played for many years between the Ins and the Outs, with hardly less unscrupulousness on the one side than on the other. Disraeli, now as before Chancellor of the Exchequer in Lord Derby's Conservative Government, now as before confronted by a hostile

majority in the House of Commons, was the first to use it for this purpose. It became known in the autumn of 1858 that the Conservative chiefs were preparing a measure on the subject to be laid before Parliament in the Session of 1859.

They had the disadvantage of finding the ground pre-occupied by the great classic orator of Radicalism with a Radical programme. Restored to Parliamentary life by the choice of a city since found unfaithful to the principles he held most dear, John Bright had spent the autumn recess in delivering a series of speeches at Birmingham, Manchester, and Glasgow on behalf of Parliamentary reform. Of these it will be enough to say that the reasons just given for the reconstitution of our representative system have been chiefly drawn from the materials they supply, and that the scheme they advocate differs from that since adopted with the consent of all parties only by being somewhat less democratic.

At the time Bright's oratorical campaign failed of its intended effect, and was acknowledged by his friends to be a failure. His opposition to the Russian and Chinese wars may have discredited his advocacy of any other cause; and the generally prosperous state of the working classes left them pretty well satisfied with things as they were. But his impressive caution against accepting any such illusory compromise as the Conservative scheme threatened to be sealed beforehand the fate of Disraeli's Reform Bill. No one who studies the provisions of that Bill can possibly accept as sincere the modern claim of the Conservatives to be a democratic party, although they may sometimes

use demagogic methods. Indeed, at that time their leaders made no such pretence. Lord Derby stated in 1852 that "one of the chief objects of his Government would be to stem the tide of democracy";[1] and a little earlier Disraeli pledged himself to oppose any measure having for its object to displace "the territorial influence and power" by which the country had been hitherto governed.[2] Accordingly, his own Bill was based on private information obtained from a number of territorial magnates giving satisfactory assurances that their power would not be endangered by its enfranchising clauses.[3] In fact, those clauses were so framed as to admit none but new middle-class voters, and to make the hold of the Tory country gentlemen on the counties stronger than ever.

Lord John Russell moved the rejection of this paltry measure, on the express ground that it left the borough franchise unaltered; in other words, because it kept up the exclusion of the working classes from power. His amendment was carried by a majority of 39, and the Conservative Government appealed to the country—that is, to the million electors of whom one-fifth returned more than half the House. They won twenty-four seats, and might have won enough to give them a working majority had not Italy intervened. For the elections really turned on the question whether, in the war that had just begun, England's moral support should be given to Austria, whose cause the Conservative statesmen thought a

[1] Bright, *Speeches*, p. 280 (People's edition).
[2] Molesworth, *History of England*, vol. ii., p. 407.
[3] Walpole, *History of Twenty-Five Years*, vol. i., p. 187.

good one, or to France and Piedmont, who were backed by Palmerston and Russell. When Parliament met it placed the Whig leaders in power by a majority of 13 only. To the general surprise, Gladstone, who had spoken and voted for the Conservative Reform Bill, took office in the new Ministry as Chancellor of the Exchequer—a step marking the definite junction of the Peelites with the Whigs. As love of Italy was the only point on which he agreed with Palmerston, the head of the new Administration, against the Conservative leaders, we shall probably not be mistaken in looking on this as the decisive element of the situation. We shall see in the next chapter how English political history, for the next six years, resolves itself entirely into a history of England's relations with the rest of the world.

Chapter XI.

LIGHT FROM THE WEST

Hardly had the new Liberal Cabinet been formed when it became of more vital moment than ever to Italian independence that it should have the support of the English Government and people. Two great French victories in the field had freed Lombardy from the Austrians, and with Austria's defeats the petty despotisms of Central Italy had fallen. Then suddenly the two Emperors, shocked by the carnage incident to their last battle, stopped the war. Napoleon III. failed to carry out his promise that Italy should be free from the Alps to the Adriatic. Austria ceded Lombardy, but retained Venice. The dispossessed Princes were to be restored, and Italian unity reduced to the mockery of a Confederation under the presidency of Pius IX. The details of this precious arrangement were to be settled by a European Congress. Then Italy's statesmen and people took the matter into their own hands, and, working all the time with consummate prudence, baffled the French Emperor's irresolute counsels by the logic of accomplished facts. Everywhere in Central Italy the proposal for union with Piedmont under King Victor Emanuel was accepted by enormous majorities. Napoleon III., who had forfeited all claim to Savoy by failing to carry out his original engagement,

now exacted its cession, and the cession of Nice also, as the price of tolerating this large addition to the territory of his ally.

The Italians had to yield, but they retorted by another bold stroke. Sicily, always writhing under the Bourbon yoke, took advantage of the general revolutionary movement to rise against it once more in the spring of 1860. With the connivance of the North Italian Government a thousand or more volunteers sailed to her assistance in May. At their head was Garibaldi, the popular hero of Italian liberty, famous for his defence of Rome against the French in 1849, and for his victories over Austrian troops in some of the minor engagements of 1859. Those former exploits were now eclipsed by the glory of his Sicilian campaign, in which he fought unaided and fought with brilliant success. What delays he experienced were caused by the unwillingness of Francesco Crispi, then and always his country's bane, to accept Victor Emanuel as King. Still, not much time was lost, for in August Garibaldi crossed over to the mainland, and on September 7th entered Naples, amid the frenzied enthusiasm of the populace. Meanwhile, a Piedmontese army sent by Cavour crossed the Papal frontier, defeated the Pope's mercenaries, liberated the Marches, and joined hands with Garibaldi's volunteers in October.

The rest belongs to Italian history. What interests us here is England's part in freeing Italy from foreign domination. This was considerable, perhaps decisive. In the European negotiations that followed the Peace of Villafranca, diplomacy had to deal more particularly with the question,

should the Central Italian States, including part of what had once been Pontifical territory, be permitted to annex themselves to Piedmont? Austria did not like such proceedings; French politicians rather dreaded, and French Catholics abhorred them; Queen Victoria and Prince Albert sympathised with the dispossessed dynasts. But Palmerston and Russell, with Gladstone's full support, steadily insisted on the right of the people to determine their own fate, and in the end they won the diplomatic game. Again, when it was proposed by the French Foreign Minister that the French and English fleets should prevent Garibaldi from crossing the Straits of Messina, Lord John Russell refused his consent, and our allies shrank from acting alone. Finally—although this is not yet a historical certainty—there is reason to believe that, not content with having exacted Savoy and Nice as the price of his acquiescence in the annexation of Central Italy, Napoleon III. was preparing to sell his agreement to the union of all Italy for further territorial concessions, the island of Sardinia, or Sardinia and Genoa, being mentioned as possible objects of plunder. On hearing this, Palmerston, whether he believed the rumour or not, distinctly gave it to be understood that England would oppose herself, if necessary by force of arms, to any such depredations.[1] Already, as regards Savoy, Lord John Russell had expressed himself in terms of no measured indignation, and his attitude had Palmerston's full approval. As our Ministers had certainly no intention of fighting France on

[1] Ashley, *Life of Palmerston* (1846–1865), vol ii., p. 182.

that subject, their remonstrance has been ridiculed as so much impotent bluster. But, as a warning to the French Emperor that any further schemes of plunder on his part would encounter more active resistance, the strong language used may not have been entirely thrown away.

Nor was this menace limited to words. In view of a possible French invasion the Volunteer Movement, begun during the Crimean War in Devonshire, received an immense impulse after the events of 1858 and 1859; while Palmerston made it a paramount object of his second Administration to see that the English arsenals should be placed in an adequate defensive condition, and that the fleet should be kept at full fighting strength.

Palmerston and Gladstone were both disciples of Canning; and it now seemed as if, under their auspices, Canning's principles were to be applied all over the world with brilliant success. Constitutional government on the English model had at length been given to Italy, and a beginning of the same system showed itself in Austria after the war of 1859, coupled with some recognition of Hungarian autonomy. At Cobden's persuasion, Napoleon III. accepted a commercial treaty with England, substituting a certain measure of free trade for the traditional French policy of protectionist exclusion. This, combined with the liberation of Italy and the partial surrender of Papal territory to the new Italian kingdom, took away so much of that Conservative and Catholic support which had hitherto been a mainstay of the Second Empire that the reactionary despot of 1852 had to seek for support

among freethinking Liberals, granting a little more freedom to the Press, and full publicity to the debates, in which a handful of Opposition speakers eloquently took part.

Beyond the Atlantic also, English ideas of liberty seemed to be gaining ground. After a long struggle, in which, thanks to the help of Northern Democrats, the Southern slaveholders had hitherto been invariably successful, the anti-slavery party at last succeeded in carrying the election of Abraham Lincoln, their candidate for the Presidency of the United States, in November, 1860. Although personally an Abolitionist, Lincoln did not stand as such, but as a Free-soiler—that is, as pledged to oppose the extension of slavery into the vast territory between the Mississippi and the Pacific, not yet organised into entirely self-governing States, but destined one day to become the most powerful section of the Union. Now slavery, shut up within its old limits, would be doomed by economic causes to ultimate extinction ; and, apart from that prospect, the Southern planters were persuaded that the Free States, when they commanded a sufficient majority, would have become so infected with Abolitionist principles as to demand a change in the Constitutional provision guaranteeing the perpetuity of their peculiar institution.

Without exactly understanding what was decided by Lincoln's election, the English middle classes joyfully welcomed it as a triumph for the anti-slavery cause that they had long held so dear ; and our democratic reformers in particular looked forward hopefully to the removal of a standing reproach to institutions they were accustomed to

hold up as in all other respects an example for English imitation.

Lincoln's election was followed in a few weeks by the break-up of the American Union. All the slave States seceded and set up a new Confederacy, of which slavery was declared to be the corner-stone. Opinion in the Northern States hesitated for some time as to whether the South should be let go in peace, or won back by fresh guarantees to slavery, or coerced back into the Union by armed force. English opinion at first went with the North, while assuming separation to be inevitable. A wit suggested that when the flag was divided the North should take the stars, leaving the stripes to the South. Unfortunately, our presuming to have any opinion at all on the subject was bitterly resented by the sensitive American people, and violent attacks were made on England in the American newspapers.[1]

There are occasions on which the President of the United States exercises autocratic power, and this was one of them. Entering on his exalted functions in March, 1861, Lincoln declared his intention of upholding the Federal Constitution according to the strict letter of the law. South Carolina, one of the seceding States, replied by firing on the Federal flag and capturing a Federal fortress. Then at last the majority of the American people resolved to maintain their national existence by force of arms, and a civil war, the most tremendous in all history, began.

When the news of this resolution reached our

[1] For evidence of this see Herbert Spencer, *Facts and Comments,* and his *Autobiography.*

shores, English upper and middle-class opinion underwent a remarkable change. Its sympathies still went with freedom, but the freedom was of a different sort. It was not now the freedom of an individual labourer to choose his own master, but the freedom of a whole people to choose the form of government they preferred to live under. For violating that right we had fought Russia, and were willing to fight Austria. For asserting that right Italy, Hungary, and Poland had won our applause. For its sake we had helped the Belgians, who were bigoted Romanists, against the Dutch, who were our fellow-Protestants, and were racially akin to us. Then, again, it seemed peculiarly unbecoming and inconsistent that the Americans, of all people, who owed their own national existence to a successful rebellion against their lawful Sovereign, should refuse to admit the same justification when urged against themselves, and should even fling the name of "rebel" as a term of reproach at those who did but inherit the tradition of Washington and Jefferson, Southerners and slave-holders also. Besides, our own experience seemed to show that the attempt to coerce Americans was not only unjustifiable, but hopeless. The Southerners were in a minority, but they were a hardy and high-spirited race, fighting in their own country for all they held most dear, with men born and trained to command at their head. History offered no example to show that such resistance as might be expected from them could be overcome.[1] Finally,

[1] The fate of the Swiss Sonderbund had been quite forgotten in 1861.

the boasted English tradition of always siding with the weaker party—singularly illustrated in recent years by the attacks on our own pro-Boers—furnished an argument without appeal for siding with the South.

Plausible as such reasonings might seem, they betrayed a complete misconception of the real interests at stake. Neither England herself nor any other homogeneous European State would have tamely submitted to such a fate as that which America was invited to accept without a struggle. Italy, Hungary, and Poland offered no parallel to the case of the seceding States. They differed in language, race, and tradition from the Powers which held them in bondage by brutally offensive means. Nor did the conflict between England and her colonies furnish an appropriate parallel; for that arose from an endeavour on the side of the Mother-country to violate the liberties of self-governing dependencies, which, moreover, were not an integral part of her nationality. Many people were so impressed by eager Northern disclaimers of any wish to interfere with slavery that they quite overlooked the legitimate claim of the Federal Government to preserve its authority intact. And they equally overlooked the decisive circumstance that the Confederates were fighting to preserve slavery for ever and ever—which should alone have sufficed to alienate the sympathies of an Abolitionist nation, as indeed it did draw the sympathies of Continental Liberalism to the North.

So well did the pro-Southerners appreciate the strength of English prejudice against slavery that they had to put forward a tariff question as the

pretended cause of separation. Then, as now, American interests were divided, the Southern planters being Free Traders and the Northern manufacturers Protectionists. These latter took advantage of the secession to pass a Protectionist measure, the Morrill Tariff, in all haste through Congress. But to represent their conduct as a justification for the South was a singular inversion of cause and effect, only to be accounted for by a very powerful exercise of the will to believe.

As to the expediency of fighting for the Union and the possibility of maintaining it by force, time has proved that Lincoln was a better prophet than the bulk of the educated classes in England. It has to be mentioned, however, that one Englishman did distinctly foretell the ultimate victory of the North. This was not a practical statesman or a soldier, but the idealist philosopher John Stuart Mill.[1] Whether the victory was or was not bought too dear may, of course, be disputed. But if, as seems likely, those four years of fighting have effectually prevented any future wars on the North American Continent, even such a frightful sacrifice of blood and treasure has not been made in vain.

A crushing defeat suffered by the chief Northern army at the beginning of the war inspired our respectable classes with a belief in the invincibility of the South which never wavered until its final collapse. Hatred for American democracy naturally sent the whole Tory party and Tory Press to the

[1] See his *Conflict in America,* first published in *Fraser's Magazine,* February, 1862 (reprinted in *Dissertations and Discussions,* vol. iii.).

side of the slaveholders.[1] And for the reasons above stated the greater number of London Liberal newspapers went with them. Among these were *The Times, The Morning Post, The Daily Telegraph, The Saturday Review, The Examiner,* and *Punch.* The North found its principal advocate in *The Daily News,* to which Harriet Martineau contributed three leading articles of supreme ability every week. It was also supported by *The Morning Star* and *The Spectator,* at that time a less widely circulated journal than it has since become.

The leading Liberal statesmen then in power—especially those who favoured Italy—favoured the South. The Foreign Secretary, now raised to the peerage as Earl Russell, described the war as waged for empire on the one side, and for independence on the other. The learned and philosophic Cornewall Lewis wrote to a friend that the South fought for independence, the North "to gratify passion and pride."[2] Gladstone, speaking at a time when nationalities were thought sacred, declared that Jefferson Davis, the Confederate President, had "made a nation of the South." Lord Palmerston, from his high position, felt bound to greater reserve; but, speaking in the House of Commons, he did not hesitate to stigmatise as "infamous" a disciplinary order issued by General Butler as Federal Governor of New Orleans.

On this question, as on the Italian question,

[1] In Parliament and on the platform Disraeli kept his pro-Southern sympathies under a veil, but they are disclosed in *Lothair.*

[2] Lewis, *The Administrations of Great Britain,* Preface, p. xx.

Queen Victoria held views directly opposed to those of her Ministers. In both instances she was probably under the influence of her husband, who, like most enlightened Germans, sided against the slaveholders. As it happened, the opinions of the royal pair, while they had no influence on the fate of Italy, told decisively on the fate of America. At the end of 1861 two Southern emissaries, named Slidell and Mason, while on their way to plead the cause of the Confederacy in Europe, were seized on board an English mail steamer, the *Trent,* by Captain Wilkes, the commanding officer of an American warship, and carried captive to Washington. When the news of this lawless action—for such it was—reached England the Government, after due consultation with the law officers of the Crown, resolved to demand the surrender of Slidell and Mason from the American authorities. A despatch in that sense was accordingly drafted and laid before the Queen for her approval. Prince Albert, at that time already smitten by a mortal disease, still retained strength and discretion enough to study the draft, and to suggest such alterations in the wording as to convert Palmerston's imperious summons into a reasonable demand that the United States Government could agree to, as in fact they did, without any loss of self-respect.

Thus the two countries were saved from the calamity of war. But in another way the governing classes of England were enabled to give considerable though indirect help to the Slave Power. Prevented by a close blockade from sending out native privateers to prey on the merchant shipping

of the North, the Confederate chiefs supplied themselves with armed cruisers for that purpose from the dockyards of Birkenhead. While one of these, the *Alabama,* was building, the American Minister in London drew Lord Russell's attention to her obvious destination, and asked to have her stopped. Trusting to the report of a subordinate, the Foreign Secretary refused to interfere. A subsequent and more urgent remonstrance was referred to the Queen's Advocate. An attack of illness prevented him from giving immediate attention to the case. Pending his decision, an embargo ought, of course, to have been laid on the suspected ship; but this obvious precaution was delayed, as if intentionally, until it came too late. When orders for her detention ultimately arrived at Liverpool, the *Alabama* had already escaped, and was on her way to begin a career of successful depredation which continued for nearly two years. Lord Russell, to do him justice, proposed in the Cabinet that the British-built privateer, which had never even entered a Confederate harbour, should be arrested in any British or Colonial port where she put in; but even so very moderate a measure of reparation was refused by his colleagues. To some it may seem that the employment of England's whole naval strength for her capture on the high seas would not have been excessive severity. In 1871 an international Court of Arbitration condemned our country to pay over three millions sterling as compensation for the damage done by the *Alabama* and her consorts to American shipowners. What ought by rights to have been exacted from Messrs. Laird of Birkenhead, who

built this mischief-making cruiser with the full knowledge of her destination, and from their abettors in the Cabinet, was taken out of the pockets of the people.

A more subtle effect of the American war on English public opinion has now to be considered. Our Radicals had long looked across the Atlantic for their example, if not for their ideal. But with the temporary break-up of the Union a terrible discredit fell on democracy, which now seemed incompatible with the existence of a great Power. That the Americans were struggling desperately to preserve their national existence gave occasion to fresh reproach, as the war temporarily put an end to personal liberty in both the contending Republics. And some people confidently predicted that the most successful general would possess himself of despotic power on the conclusion of the war. Meanwhile the most was made of the military and financial errors necessarily incidental to so great a conflict waged by an inexperienced administration. Southern successes, due to a defensive position and to the presence of more professional officers than the Northern armies could obtain, were credited to the aristocratic character of the slave power. It seemed to be forgotten for what military disasters our own aristocratic institutions had been responsible. In striking contrast to George III., Lincoln always put the ablest generals he could find in high command, so that in two years the ablest of all came to the top.

All this time the splendour and prosperity of the Second Empire was exercising a fascination on

English upper-class opinion which told also in an anti-democratic sense. More especially Napoleon III.'s Free Trade policy, although inspired by an English Liberal, tended to prejudice men's minds against free representative government; for the commercial treaty with England was unquestionably imposed on France by a despot's will.

With public opinion given over to reactionary political influences, it was inevitable that Parliamentary reform should be shelved. The Liberal Government had redeemed the promise on whose strength they regained office in 1859, by introducing, in 1860, a Bill that would have increased the electorate by thirty-five per cent. But, being received with indifference both by the House and the people, it died of sheer neglect. There could not have been a better proof that the last general election had been won, not on the question of reform, but on the question of Italian independence. And, although the American Civil War had nothing to do with this failure, not having then begun, it effectually prevented the question from being revived for some years to come.

The short-lived Parliament of 1857 was in other ways more Liberal than its successor. A Bill for the Abolition of Church Rates, which passed the Commons by a majority of sixty-three in 1858, was defeated over and over again in the 'sixties. In 1858, also, the Commons forced the Lords to admit Jews to Parliament. In 1860 they only passed the repeal of the paper duty, a tax on knowledge, by a majority of nine, and then submitted to its reimposition by the Lords. Next year it only passed by

eighteen votes, the resistance of the Upper House being this time with extreme difficulty overcome. The session of 1858 saw also the abolition of the property qualification for members of Parliament—one of the points of the Charter. But the greatest triumph of reason over tradition was won the year before, when the divorce law, as it now exists, first came into being. Before that date marriage with an unfaithful partner could be dissolved only by a special Act of Parliament, obtainable only after two distinct suits, in two separate law courts, had been won. Practically, of course, this meant the denial of redress to all but the very rich; while among the rich, with very few exceptions, it was granted only to men. What share superstition had in the resistance offered to the Divorce Bill is shown by the fact that Gladstone fought it clause by clause in the Commons Committee, and that fourteen Bishops against two wished to prohibit the re-marriage of divorced persons. Palmerston's stubborn resolution alone saved the Bill, which, as it was, escaped wreckage in the Lords only by two votes. But for his firmness it might have been delayed till thirty years later.

A reactionary Ministry and Parliament might well have plunged the country into war with America by breaking the blockade of the Southern ports, had they not been held back by the silent determination of those most interested in the matter—the English people. Of these, according to no friendly witness, Earl Russell, the majority—that is to say, the working classes—sympathised with the North. Their choice did them the more honour

because vast numbers of operatives engaged in the cotton manufacture had been deprived of their subsistence by the stoppage of the raw material, for which at that time we were almost entirely dependent on the plantations of the Southern slaveholders, who, indeed, would probably not have kindled a civil war but for their confident reliance on the necessities of the English market. Now, the patience and dignity with which the operatives—and not these alone, but also the small traders who lived on their custom—bore the sufferings of what was called the Cotton Famine gave the upper classes quite a new idea of their worth; while again the liberality of all who were not themselves in want to the sufferers gave these a friendlier feeling towards those above them in the social scale.[1]

Besides this very obvious reaction, the American War exercised another and profounder effect on the future of English Liberalism. It dissociated the democratic cause from the idea of peace at any price, from the taint of a supposed devotion to material interests, from the suspected bias of antipatriotism. If reform excited no enthusiasm, this indifference, as has been already observed, owed something to the fact that its most eloquent advocate, John Bright, had made himself unpopular by opposing the Russian War. But now Bright came forward as also the most eloquent advocate of the North; and, although he never fairly faced the

[1] I am sorry to have to mention, as a dark shade in this otherwise pleasing picture, the infamous calumny, long circulated among the respectables, that John Bright contributed nothing to the relief of the operatives. The real fact, if I remember rightly, is that he sacrificed the savings of a lifetime in helping them through the crisis.

implications of his championship, it constituted a virtual admission that there were circumstances in which a sanguinary war might with justice be waged—not only, as by Poles, Hungarians, and Italians, for national independence, but also, as Lincoln said over the dead of Gettysburg, that government of the people, by the people, for the people should not perish from the earth.

While the friends of peace were pointing England to the paths of honour and safety, the friends of intervention were dragging her through excruciating alternatives between disaster and shame. First came the ineffective Ministerial attacks, already mentioned, on the French Emperor for his annexation of Savoy and Nice. Then the Polish insurrection of 1863 gave a fresh opportunity, which was not neglected, for addressing Platonic remonstrances to Russia. On this occasion Lord Russell got France and Austria to join in the ridiculous performance, which only drew down on them the cool and cutting insolence of Prince Gortchakoff, the Russian Chancellor. Our Foreign Secretary never intended to fight for Poland; but the next European complication that arose involved a serious risk of war. This was the Schleswig-Holstein question. We need not enter into the legal intricacies of that fateful affair. It will suffice to mention that the interests of a considerable German population were at stake, whose wishes for a long time won no more attention than if they had been a flock of sheep. All were forcibly attached to the Crown of Denmark, which passed into a new family towards the end of 1863;

while some were forcibly incorporated with the Danish kingdom, and subjected to the oppression of Danish administrators, who tried to deprive them of their German nationality. When the change of dynasty took place, the smaller German members of the Diet sent troops into Holstein, which was a member of the Germanic Confederation, but refrained from entering Schleswig. Count Bismarck, the Prussian Prime Minister, saw and used the opportunity to intervene. Taking the work out of the feeble hands of the Diet, he persuaded Austria to join Prussia in occupying both the Duchies with their combined armies.

Bismarck was, at that time, not popular either in Germany or in England. Animated, like Cavour, by the highest patriotic purposes, and, like Cavour, absolutely unscrupulous in the means he adopted for carrying them out, this man had resolved to attempt again what the Parliament of Professors had failed to achieve in 1848—the union of all Germany, under the supremacy of Prussia. Seeing that the expulsion of Austria from the Germanic Confederation was a necessary preliminary to this work; seeing, further, that, in his own vigorous language, her expulsion had to be effected, not by speeches and resolutions, but by blood and iron, he began by re-fashioning the Prussian army into an irresistible weapon of war. His object could not be publicly explained; and the Prussian Representative Chamber, fearing that the new model might be used to destroy the small amount of public liberty then existing, refused to grant the necessary supplies. Bismarck, with his master's support, raised taxes on the sole authority of the Upper

House. A grave constitutional crisis seemed imminent, and ominous references to Charles I. and Strafford ran round the German Press; but the taxes were obediently paid, and the policy of the great Minister triumphed.

It triumphed no less signally abroad than at home. The policy of the German Powers excited the indignation of the English people, who, as usual, supposed that, because they were strong, they must also be wrong. It so happened that an interesting domestic occurrence enlisted their sympathies still more deeply on the Danish side. Early in 1863 the Prince of Wales had married the beautiful daughter of the Prince to whom diplomacy had assigned the fateful heritage of Denmark and the Duchies. The charms of this young lady won all hearts, and many Don Quixotes longed to send over champions to fight for her injured sire. Palmerston vainly tried to form a triple alliance with France and Russia, vainly blustered about what England's unaided strength could do. With the Queen and the majority of the Cabinet against him, he could only convene a Conference in London, which failed to reconcile the belligerents. Denmark fought on, but had to lay down her arms in a few weeks, lured to her ruin, men thought, by a blind reliance on England's help.

Canning's policy, in the hands of his most brilliant successor, after freeing Italy, had suffered three signal defeats. It was now utterly bankrupt, and could no more stave off the new Reform Bill than it had staved off the old.

The first to recognise the change in public

opinion wrought by the influence of the American War, combined with the collapse of our foreign policy, was Gladstone. Before the close of the Danish question his adhesion to the democratic cause was announced in a powerful speech on a private Bill for lowering the franchise, which at once marked him out as its coming leader. But in the cause of religious Liberalism he still lagged behind, giving only an equivocal support to Irish Church disestablishment, and frankly opposing the abolition of university tests. Yet the currents of public opinion were flowing with a greater impetus in that direction, and were destined to effect as rapid a revolution. We have now to trace the history of the great intellectual movement to which they gave expression, and which constitutes so vital an element in the English history of the later nineteenth century.

Chapter XII.

COSMIC ECONOMY

In a former chapter we traced the development of English philosophy, science, literature, and religious thought, down to a point approximately dated by the outbreak of the Russian War. We have now to deal with a period of about equal length, roughly coinciding with the political supremacy of Lord Palmerston. There is no sharp line of demarcation between the two, and to a certain extent they even overlap. But, on the whole, we shall not be mistaken in saying that, while the first is a period of quiet seed-time in which ideas are prepared, outlined, and either tentatively put forward or stored up for future use, in the second they are ripened, elaborated, applied, and, so to speak, violently exploded on the world, with the result of obtaining, if not its assent, at least its full attention and respect.

The Palmerstonian period is also one of hero-worship, of splendid publicity and homage given not only to ideas, but even more to their representatives ; a time when work done with little honour in the previous years comes in for universal recognition and applause, with this effect also that new reputations are made at a single stroke, being rapidly imposed by the best judges on the multitude of listeners. I have said that the Conservative

reaction under Peel, by diverting the English intellect from practice to theory and imagination, contributed to, if it did not create, the great ideal achievements of the early Victorian age. Now in the Palmerstonian period a fresh source of energy comes into play—the ready reception given to new genius, the hope of winning immediate applause, the certainty almost of winning it when genius is displayed. It seems as if the French alliance and the fashionableness of French things gives a certain French tone to our ways of thinking; while mere brilliancy being much less common here than in France, the true superiorities are not yet discouraged and crowded out by the mediocrities of distinction.

Thus it happens that the value and literary power of Carlyle, Grote, and Macaulay among historians, of Dickens, Thackeray, and Charlotte Brontë among novelists, of Tennyson and the Brownings among poets, of Ruskin as an æsthetician, of Maurice as a theologian, of Mill as a philosopher and publicist, although founded on previous performances whose eminence contemporary critics had not failed to recognise, seem first to have found universal admission between the early 'fifties and 'sixties; while, again, Anthony Trollope, Charles Reade, and George Eliot in fiction, Froude in history, Jowett in theology, Bain and Herbert Spencer in philosophy, Buckle and Maine in sociology, Darwin in science, Matthew Arnold in criticism, and Swinburne in poetry, reach their full reputation immediately after the publication of their first very important works, which fall within the specified period.

On looking back across this distance of time to all those high and diversified activities, one is most impressed by the complete emergence and incipient triumph of a single idea—the idea of evolution. But that idea would have been self-contradictory had it come as a sudden revelation, or had it effected an instantaneous transformation of thought. We have seen, in fact, how Robert Chambers applied the doctrine of development as a universal law of change in the *Vestiges,* thus preparing the way for Spencer and Darwin. Hardly any advance has since been made on his general arguments, which at the time when they appeared would have been accepted as convincing but for theological truculence and scientific timidity. And Chambers himself only gave unity to thoughts already in wide circulation. Progress and development were great words in English, French, and German philosophy at the time of the French Revolution. But they had a very uphill battle to fight along the whole line. The theory of catastrophes in geology, the theory of immutable species in biology, the mediæval enthusiasm of the Romanticists, the dogma of human corruption in theology —these were among the obstacles to be overcome.

What ultimately secured the victory for evolution was the cumulative argument, the convergence of effects, the concentration of forces on a single point of attack, the interpenetration of ideas constantly thought of together. Neither Comte nor Mill was an evolutionist; but the *Positive Philosophy* and the *System of Logic* tended to make their readers evolutionists by bringing nature and man under the same categories. Human history

subjected to order gave progress in return as a constitutive principle to biology. And a really universal law of causation must include the formation by some physical process of new organic species from pre-existing forms of matter. Now, to repeat what has been said before, it seemed infinitely more probable that those pre-existing forms were slightly different organisms than that they were unorganised matter.

Such was the line taken by a very vigorous and independent thinker, who happened to be also a clergyman, Baden Powell (father of the celebrated General), at that time Professor of Astronomy at Oxford. He had been a strenuous opponent of the Tractarian Movement, and he now resisted with equal energy the narrow Biblical Evangelicalism which had profited by its collapse to impose a degrading Sabbatarian tyranny on the necks of Englishmen. By way of giving a religious colouring to the higher education, University teaching had been kept in the hands of the clergy, with the result that at Oxford the ablest clerics had mostly become freethinkers, and of these Baden Powell was one. Perhaps from being behind the scenes he had learned to look on ecclesiastical terrors with more contempt than his lay brethren. At any rate, no other official representative of science adhered to the general doctrine of the *Vestiges* with the fearless publicity of this Professor.

Granting that, with the exclusion of supernatural interference from the order of nature, evolution became a logical necessity of thought, the question arose by what physical agency the production of

organic species had been accomplished. Geologists had no difficulty in explaining how the present conformation of the earth's crust had come about, for the forces determining its shape and composition might be seen perpetually at work. Astronomers had never witnessed the birth of a stellar system ; but physical analogies enabled them to interpret it as a process of condensation on the largest scale. Millenniums of recorded experience taught historians how social structures are built up. But no human eye had ever seen a new species come into existence, nor could naturalists name any force capable of creating so much as a new beetle. Palæontology proved that the marvel had somehow or other come about over and over again in geologic time ; how it came about remained a mystery. Robert Chambers sought the key in embryology, which is indeed an abridged record of evolution, suggesting the successive transformations of one living type into another ; but it merely gives evidence of the changes, leaving their causes unexplained.

Help came from the social sciences, and especially from the most complete among them, which was Political Economy. Since Adam Smith, the increasing division of labour had been a recognised note of industrial progress ; and Aristotle, the greatest naturalist of antiquity, had long ago pointed out that in the higher animal organisms the physiological division of labour is more perfect than in the lower. But neither Aristotle nor Milne-Edwards, who revived his doctrine in the last century, connected it with evolution, which, indeed, neither of them accepted. This step seems

to have been first taken by Herbert Spencer in an essay on "Progress," published by the *Westminster Review* in 1857.

The industrial division of labour is an arrangement designedly entered into by the members of a human society for their common advantage. We cannot suppose that the components of an animal or vegetal organism are capable of such conscious adjustments to each other's convenience; and so some other cause must be sought to account for the physiological division of labour.

Such a cause is suggested by the economical idea of competition. Malthus has explained how this force is brought to bear on society by the law of population. The number of individuals to be fed tends to grow faster than the means of feeding them. Hence arises a struggle for existence, in which the stronger or better equipped survive, and the weaker or worse equipped perish. Therefore, an organism which in some way or other has become more differentiated than its competitors will beat them out of the field, just as a society will when it possesses a similar advantage. And the same holds true of every imaginable superiority by which one individual or species is distinguished from the rest. Speaking generally, what is best adapted to the conditions of life has the best chance of living and of propagating its kind.

England was the European country where the growth of population and the resulting competition for the means of subsistence most obtruded themselves on public notice, and first became subjects of systematic study. And so for thirty years Englishmen alone had the happy idea of extending

the competitive principle to biology, and using it as a method for explaining the origin of varieties and species. In 1813 Wells, to whom we owe the true theory of dew, accounted for the different colours of the different races of mankind by natural selection; in 1831 Matthew, a botanist, applied it to organic evolution in general; in 1852 Herbert Spencer used what he called "the survival of the fittest" to explain the development of brain-power in man; while at the same time Charles Darwin and Mr. A. R. Wallace, quite unknown to him and to each other, were working out the law of natural selection over the whole field of animal and vegetal life. Their views were first made public in 1858, and Darwin brought out his *Origin of Species* in the following year. Only the adverse influence of religious opinion can account for such a long delay; and, in fact, one of England's foremost naturalists, Richard Owen, in a private conversation with a clergyman soon after the publication of Darwin's book, blamed the great discoverer for offending vulgar prejudice, and himself tried to crush the new theory, with which he agreed all the time, by a coldly supercilious criticism, which he never thought fit to acknowledge, in the *Edinburgh Review*.

Evolution gave offence to theological prejudice in three distinct ways. It contradicted the obvious meaning of what most people had been taught to accept as an inspired and infallible account of the origin of things in the Bible. It destroyed Paley's argument for the existence of God—that is, the attempt to show that the structure of the animal body can only be accounted for on the hypothesis

that it is the work of an intelligent creator. And by deriving the human race from an animal ancestor it suggested that the human soul is reserved for no higher destinies than the soul of a brute. This last departure from current orthodoxy was the most easily intelligible and the most likely to excite popular feeling against the new views. Even Lyell, who accepted Darwinism as a whole, could not reconcile himself to man's derivation from an ape-like ancestor; while Carlyle, who, disbelieving as he did in miracles, would have been puzzled to find any other genealogy, rejected it with utter abhorrence. *The Daily Telegraph*, at that time a Liberal newspaper, tried to excite a prejudice against Fawcett, the future Liberal Minister, among the electors of Southwark, on the ground that he had written a favourable notice of Darwin in *Macmillan's Magazine*.

A few months before the Southwark election Darwinism had come up for discussion at the annual meeting of the British Association. Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford, who had some pretensions to figure as a man of science, took part in the debate, and so far forgot his good manners as to ask Professor Huxley, who represented the evolutionist side, whether he was descended from an ape through his grandfather or his grandmother. Huxley, who excelled the Bishop as much in sarcasm as in science, answered that he would prefer such an ancestor to a rhetorician who sought to cover his ignorance of the question by irrelevant appeals to religious prejudice.

It has become the fashion among more recent

theologians to contend that, assuming what they admit to be highly probable, the derivation of man's body from an ape-like ancestor, his mind owes its origin to some higher process of creation—which, indeed, is only another way of saying that mind does not depend on brain. But this line of retreat from an untenable position had been cut off before Darwin's discoveries were made known. Herbert Spencer, already named as one of the early evolutionists, published in 1855 the first draft of his *Principles of Psychology*. Here, at the very outset, he shows by a masterly analysis of the reasoning process that the most abstract mathematical inferences involve no more than a continuous application of the power to identify, combined with the power to discriminate. Now these two powers are exhibited by the humblest creature possessing any trace of consciousness whatever; and these, combined with the power of retention, or memory, which also can be denied to no animal, suffice to account for the highest intellectual acquisitions that have ever been stored in a human mind. And all such exercises of conscious intelligence, however they may vary in quantity, agree in the one essential quality, which alone gives them any value as vital functions—the quality of bringing the organism into harmony with its environment. In other words, the evolution of life is one vast process of natural education, preparing its pupils to hold their own in the battle of life—a principle, of course, not less, but more, applicable to the development of the emotions and the will than to the development of the intellect.

By a remarkable coincidence, just as Darwin and Wallace had rediscovered Natural Selection and

used it to explain the origin of species, independently of one another, so also another psychologist, Alexander Bain, gave substantially the same explanation of reason as Spencer's, in his work on *The Senses and the Intellect,* published at the same time, and, apparently, without any previous communication between the two philosophers. Bain says nothing about evolution, but his analysis was perhaps all the more effective in suggesting a fundamental unity of composition between human and animal intelligence. His work also had at first a much wider circulation than Spencer's *Psychology.*

Spencer belonged to a family of schoolmasters; there was a good deal of the pedagogue in his composition, and a volume on education figures among his miscellaneous works. It therefore lay very near that one with his generalising habits should conceive all experience and all nature as a process of rigorous schooling, conducted on a self-acting system of rewards and punishments, promotions and expulsions, with continual reference to a period of future emancipation, and having for its ideal the ultimate identification of work with play in some far-off society of the future, revived from the dreams of Priestley, Godwin, and Shelley. Thus, in Spencer's case at least, evolution, so far from being a method borrowed by the study of man from the study of nature, seems to be the very reverse—a light thrown back from human experience on unconscious physical processes.

Nor was it educational ideas alone that Spencer used to elucidate the mystery of organic origins. We have seen how both he and others extended

the laws of political economy to all vital phenomena, finding the struggle for existence and the increasing division of labour exemplified in fields unknown to Malthus and Adam Smith. Spencer had been brought up by an uncle zealous for the new Poor Law and the Anti-Corn-Law League, a sworn foe to Protection. By his Nonconformist connections also he had learned to look with profound distrust on State interference with religion and education. Thus, from the conviction that men, for their own good, had better be left to their own natural instincts arose the far wider conviction that, in building up the great edifice of nature, things had been let alone—had been made what they are by the spontaneous play of physical forces without the aid of a superintending Providence, or even the initial impulse of a Creator.

By a curious fatality, the individualistic ideas, so prevalent in his youth, out of which Spencer evolved evolution itself were at first far more intelligible and popular than the vast cosmic philosophy they inspired him to conceive. Then, as time went on and the new theory of a self-made world won ever wider assent, the enthusiasm for self-made men, for self-help, for Individualism, grew less, to the extreme scandal of the aging philosopher, who had become, if possible, a still more confident believer in *laissez-faire,* above all in the matter of national education, on finding it confirmed, as he thought, by the laws of Nature herself. In fact, with far less ingenuity than Spencer's, it is perfectly possible to extract from the laws of nature any system of morality and social organisation that we choose to put into them. When they have constructed their

human system on what seem to be the most rational motives—whether these lead to Individualism or Socialism, or something between the two—philosophers will always be able to satisfy themselves that it is the inevitable outcome of a cosmic evolution.

A thinker of less combining and deducing power than Herbert Spencer, but with more knowledge and greater literary brilliancy, acquired a world-wide reputation by applying much the same economical philosophy to the interpretation of history. This was Henry Thomas Buckle, the first volume of whose famous *History of Civilisation in England* appeared in 1857. Brought up in the same Free Trade and Individualist principles, he showed the same eagerness to read social phenomena by their light. According to Buckle, the Protectionist spirit in Church and State is, and always has been, the great obstacle to advancing civilisation. Where population multiplies very rapidly civilisation does not advance at all, for there the supply of labour always outruns the demand, and so the great majority of the people fall into helpless dependence on the landlords and capitalists. Only in Europe and its Colonies has there been some approach to an emancipation of the masses, and therefore some effective resistance to oppression. Still, even in Europe priests and kings have done untold mischief by undertaking more or less to manage everybody's affairs, and to choose everybody's beliefs for him. Left to themselves, men naturally seek to accumulate knowledge and to accumulate wealth. What they do

ultimately depends on what they know; and, just as political economy studies the laws governing the accumulation and distribution of wealth, so the scientific historian of civilisation has to study in what ways knowledge is acquired and diffused.

We cannot tell how Buckle would have worked out this part of his great scheme, for he did not live to finish even the General Introduction to his *History*. But the book, so far as it goes, contributed very powerfully to the emancipation of English thought from theological prejudices. Here he falls in with the whole trend of modern English historiography. Without concert and without any hint at a common purpose, Dr. Arnold, Carlyle, Grote, Macaulay, Milman, and Froude had all been waging war against the fashionable Romanticism, the Oxford Movement, and Young England. But so far a smug Protestantism had been permitted to reap the fruit of their labours. Now, Buckle made no secret of his opinion that, so far as bigotry and superstition went, there was little to choose between the Catholic and Protestant Churches. It is already prominent in his first volume; while the second, published four years later (1861), illustrates it from beginning to end, Spain and Scotland being made to furnish examples of the ills wrought by priestly domination under widely contrasted forms of theological belief.

Buckle had a profound faith, resting, apparently, on no very logical grounds, in God and a future life; and in his first volume he showed a dislike, amounting to intolerance, of their open denial. Mill, who personally rejected all theology, although

he considered that a fairly good case might be made out for what is called "natural religion," strongly objected to having an embargo laid on its public discussion. To secure this right, it was not enough, in his opinion, that all the legal restrictions on its exercise should be repealed. Alexis de Tocqueville had put into currency a telling phrase, "The tyranny of the majority"; and Mill well knew that such tyranny could make itself felt without any appeal to mob violence. His most popular work, the essay *On Liberty,* published in 1859, has for its object to define the limits beyond which social restraint on the sayings and doings of the individual should not be pushed. According to him, liberty of discussion should be absolute; while liberty of action should be allowed where the actions are purely self-regarding—that is, where the interests of the agent, or of the agents in cases where different persons agree in a common line of conduct, are alone concerned.

Evidently we have here also, as in the case of Buckle and the evolutionists, a generalisation of the economic principles associated with Bentham's school. Bentham himself had no love for liberty or individuality as such, and would not have objected to making people happy without asking their leave, if the thing could be done. Nor does Mill, at least avowedly, claim individual liberty as an indefeasible right. He argues for it as a means, and the best means, for securing the happiness of the community. Nevertheless, it looks as if he had inherited a certain metaphysical bias in favour of liberty as such, which made him more sensible to the utilitarian arguments on its side than to

those that might have been urged on the opposite side.

A hard-and-fast line between society and the units of which it is composed cannot, in fact, be drawn ; and, therefore, no general law of liberty can be laid down. With such an imitative animal as man, an action, to be strictly self-regarding, must also be strictly private, and so by its very nature withdrawn from the cognisance of others. Various vices of a purely self-regarding character may, of course, be very effectually prevented by not allowing the means for indulging in them to be sold. But, on self-defensive principles, society is surely justified in shielding its members against temptation ; and Mill himself seems to admit this in discussing the ethics of public-house legislation, and the expediency of prohibiting the pandar's trade.

In his argument against religious intolerance Mill occupies much firmer ground, though not all of it is of equal value ; and the question of whether or not it is desirable to sanction the education of children in beliefs generally rejected by the educated classes remains untouched. Like most Benthamites, he was against having religion of any kind taught at the public expense.

Mill's claim of the right to question every dogma of religion, even the most fundamental, made at least one illustrious convert in the person of Buckle, who wrote an enthusiastic review of the essay *On Liberty,* and, contrary to the strong language used in his own first volume, expressed his readiness to consider patiently anything that could be said against his own belief in a future life. He also

took the opportunity of denouncing Sir John Coleridge for an oppressive sentence passed on a poor man, found afterwards to be insane, for scribbling some blasphemous expressions on a gate. Holyoake, who supplied Buckle with the information on which he wrote, afterwards admitted that his version of the case was not absolutely correct. At the same time, it remains true that there was a gross miscarriage of justice, directly due to religious prejudice, and that Buckle performed a great public service by exposing it. His conduct, according to Holyoake, "is the only example of a gentleman coming forward in that personal way to vindicate the right of free thought in the friendless and obscure."[1]

Meanwhile a devoted band of scholars were struggling to secure the right to free thought where hitherto it had been held not to exist—that is, among the clergy of the Established Church. We have already seen how, towards the middle of the century, a freethinking movement, which had been gaining ground during the whole previous decade, suddenly burst into public notice. All through the 'fifties a number of writers, representing every shade of advanced opinion, from liberal Christianity to something not very distinguishable from atheism, kept up a fire of criticism on the current religious beliefs. Among others, James Martineau, the foremost Unitarian divine of the century, made himself conspicuous by articles, contributed to the *Westminster* and *National Reviews,* exposing the weakness of clerical apologies

[1] G. J. Holyoake, *Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life,* vol. ii., p. 96.

for the old dogmas, and introducing the revolutionary Biblical criticism of Germany to English readers. But the most telling assaults were delivered within the pale of the Establishment itself. A band of clergymen, collectively known as the Broad Church, although some of them earnestly repudiated the name, kept the attention of religious circles on the stretch by the audacity of their speculations, sometimes uttered even in the pulpit. F. W. Robertson, the most powerful of English preachers after Dr. Newman, and F. D. Maurice, the most profound of Anglican theologians, made themselves the organs of a semi-mystical religion, whose positive significance remained much less intelligible than its sharp antagonism to the dogmas of Original Sin and the Atonement, as held by Catholic and Calvinist alike. Maurice, in particular, gave a new interpretation to the Christian doctrine of damnation, which seemed to hold out some hope of final redemption to the lost; but he had to pay for being so far in advance of his age by the surrender of his professorship at King's College, London. However, Maurice's friend and disciple Kingsley continued to preach his gospel, unmolested, to rural congregations in Somerset.

Soon the neology of the cloister, as it was called, far outran the neology of the pulpit. It flourished at Oxford, and most of all in the most intellectual of Oxford Colleges, Balliol, whose then Tutor and future Master, Benjamin Jowett, already passed for being an "infidel" in 1851. In 1855 he edited some of St. Paul's Epistles, with accompanying essays in which his gift for subtle and daring speculation found the freest exercise. Not only

were the current doctrines of the Fall and the Atonement unsparingly dissected, but the hollowness of the stock arguments for Theism was exposed by a few dexterous punctures. His orthodox opponents revenged themselves by compelling him to sign the Thirty-nine Articles on being appointed Greek Professor, and, less excusably, by defeating for several years a proposal for the better endowment of his chair. In this and other ways it was attempted to crush out liberal theology in the Universities.

As a protest against this repressive system, seven liberal theologians issued a collective manifesto of their opinions in the shape of a volume entitled *Essays and Reviews*. All but two of the contributors were Oxford men, and all but one, Charles Goodwin, were clerics. Professor Baden Powell, already mentioned as one of the earliest champions of evolution, sent the most advanced of all the essays. He had recently published a volume on *The Order of Nature,* almost openly denying the possibility of miracles; and of that volume his paper is a simple summary, with the addition of a triumphant reference to Darwin's *Origin of Species*, which had appeared in the interim. Next to this in importance ranks a review of Bunsen's Biblical Researches by Professor Rowland Williams, a Cambridge Hebraist with the Cambridge directness of speech. Without endorsing in all particulars the views of his German guide, Williams intimates pretty plainly that the Bible contains no supernatural predictions, that much of its history is inauthentic, and not all of its morality immaculate. Bunsen's pantheistic

interpretation of the most essential Christian dogmas is also quoted with manifest complacency. H. B. Wilson, who had acted as the informal editor of the volume, practically denies the claim of Christianity to be taken in any exclusive sense as a divine revelation; while Temple, the future Primate, points out that the doctrine of immortality seems to have been discovered without any supernatural aid by the Persians, and borrowed from them by the Jews. The volume closes with a long essay by Professor Jowett, *On the Interpretation of Scripture,* the drift of which is that, if the Bible were read like any other book, much of its supposed dogmatic teaching would melt into air.

A policy of discreet silence in official circles nearly caused *Essays and Reviews* to fail of its intended effect, which was to excite discussion and controversy. Not until ten months after its publication was attention drawn to what had been done. An article in the *Westminster Review* for October, 1860, written by Mr. Frederic Harrison, the future Positivist leader, emphasised with passionate eloquence the true inwardness of the manifesto, at the same time inviting the Essayists to abandon their futile attempts at a compromise between the old beliefs and the new. Bishop Wilberforce followed suit with an article in the *Quarterly Review,* accepting the *Westminster* estimate of the Essayists, but denouncing them as traitors to Christian truth. At his suggestion, also, the whole Bench of Bishops joined in a public protest against the volume. Finally, Arthur Stanley, himself an advanced but extremely reticent Broad Churchman, summed up the situation in the *Edinburgh Review*

with that sort of impartiality which consists in distributing more or less scathing censures all round, his own personal friends Temple and Jowett being alone excepted from the general condemnation.

All these discussions excited public interest to the highest pitch, and the printing-presses could barely keep pace with the demand for a book supposed to have shaken Christianity to its foundations.

Baden Powell, the most advanced Rationalist of the band, had died soon after the publication of *Essays and Reviews*. Of the five remaining clerical contributors only two, Williams and Wilson, had laid themselves open to any tangible charge of heresy, and these two, as it happened, were also beneficed clergymen. They were prosecuted before the Court of Arches, and acquitted on all but a few counts of the accusation. On this occasion the Judge decided that a clergyman might, consistently with his ordination vows, deny the historical accuracy or the moral soundness of any passage in the Bible. On the points where his judgment went against them, Williams and Wilson appealed to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, and obtained a reversal of the adverse sentence in every particular. Of the issues finally decided in their favour the most important related to the eternity of future punishment. The supreme tribunal declared, by the mouth of Lord Chancellor Westbury, that the formularies of the Church were not sufficiently distinct to warrant the condemnation of a clergyman who hoped for the ultimate salvation of the sinner.

Dr. Pusey and his Evangelical allies were less charitably disposed. They drew up a declaration of belief in Scriptural infallibility and the eternity of hell, which every clergyman was invited "for the love of God" to sign. Less than half of those in holy orders responded to this touching appeal; and few names carrying much authority figured in the list.

For those to whom faith means the negation of reason the occasion offered by Pusey must have seemed singularly well-timed. Not long before his declaration was circulated the untrustworthiness of various Biblical statements had been mathematically demonstrated by a missionary Bishop, who was also the greatest living authority on arithmetic. While the foremost German and Dutch Hebraists were exhausting their ingenuity in trying to discover how many distinct documents had been laid under contribution by the compilers of the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua, Dr. Colenso felt himself impelled by the naïve appeal of a Zulu convert to investigate the more elementary question, Are they true? A novice in the higher criticism, he at that time merely knew that geology had done much towards demolishing the first chapters of Genesis as genuine history. But a few months' labour led him to more destructive conclusions than all his predecessors put together had made good in two hundred years. What was more damaging to the credit of the priestly historians whose work has come down to us under the names of Moses and Joshua than their too literal acceptance of ancient mythical cosmogonies, it

appeared, from the Bishop's statistical method of criticism, that they had been guilty over and over again of deliberate fabrication, committed in the interest of their religious beliefs. This discovery came like a revelation to the Dutch critic Kuenen, and soon set him on the track of those new theories which, in his and Wellhausen's hands, have revolutionised the study of Old Testament history and converted the most orthodox divines to views much more advanced than those originally put forward by Colenso.

It is doubtful whether the Bishop of Natal would have felt justified in publishing the result of his inquiries had not the judgment of the Court of Arches proved that their avowal was quite compatible with the retention of his position in the Church. Alluding to the academic rank of the Essayists, Lord Shaftesbury prayed to be saved from the tyranny of Professors. So far from being tyrants, Baden Powell, Rowland Williams, and Jowett were enabling the English middle classes to think for themselves. "By all means let us have free inquiry," said Disraeli, "but let it be from free inquirers." Not only were the clergy free inquirers, but they were guiding the more timid steps of the laity in what Carlyle called the Exodus from Houndsditch—the deliverance from Rabbinical superstition.

Privately some of the Essayists—and indeed some of their opponents also—were known to hold far more subversive opinions than those they put in print; indeed, the hostility to their printed opinions partly arose from a knowledge of their conversational utterances. Not only a desire to

preserve their social position, but also a vague dread of revolutionary convulsions as a result of having Rationalism diffused among the working classes, may have been the excuse for a reticence rather apt to be confounded with insincerity.

Be this as it may, no such need of reticence was felt among those whose mental balance the Broad Church were fearful of upsetting. A tradition not only of free thinking, but of plain speaking, had been kept up by the democratic working-class leaders ever since Thomas Paine; and we have seen to what lengths it was carried by Holyoake. In his hands, however, Secularism remained, like the Positivism of Comte, rather a constructive social doctrine ignoring theology than an aggressive criticism labouring to destroy it. A younger friend of Holyoake's, Charles Bradlaugh, gave Secularism this more aggressive character by setting up, in 1860, a journal called the *National Reformer*, an article in whose programme was avowed "antagonism to every known religious system," and especially to every form of Christianity.[1]

Bradlaugh and his colleagues carried on for several years an Atheistic propaganda by pamphlets and lectures which the upper and middle classes regarded with affected contempt and quite unaffected aversion. Public opinion had by this time advanced so far that the blasphemy laws were not put in action, but a good deal of ruffianism was employed for the purpose of suppressing free discussion, against which the sufferers could not obtain legal redress. Where public debates

[1] *Life of Charles Bradlaugh*, vol. i., p. 120.

between the Freethinkers and their clerical opponents were tolerated, insulting and mendacious personalities too often passed as good substitutes for argument on the orthodox side.

Just as the religious crisis was becoming acute, Herbert Spencer began to publish in serial form the first of those important works which won for him during his life a more extended reputation than any other philosopher in the world's history has ever enjoyed. It was called *First Principles,* and its object was to establish on grounds of experience and of *a priori* reasoning combined the law of evolution as the most comprehensive of scientific generalisations. None knew better than Spencer how radically inconsistent was that law with the belief in a creating or interfering Providence ; and indeed a prime object of all his speculations was to show, so far as possible, that all phenomena are produced by mechanical causation. This was also what the founders of the *National Reformer* believed, and, in their opinion, such a doctrine left no room for anything that has ever been called a God or a religion. Spencer did not agree with their negations. The antiquity and wide diffusion of religion convinced him that there must be some truth mixed up with its errors. On the other hand, even those ultimate truths in which evolution itself is rooted leave us, he thinks, confronted by the inexplicable mystery of consciousness and existence itself, the dim sense of a Power behind phenomena, impossible either to define or to refine away. To recognise that this ever-present Power exists, but can never be known, is the essence of

religion, and also the reconciliation of religion with science.

All that Spencer tells us—and he tells us a good deal—about the Unknowable Power goes to identify it with the whole of what is. Such absoluteness necessarily excludes personality, which at any rate involves the antithesis of subject and object; and his psychology also suggests, to say the least of it, that there is no consciousness without a nervous system. Precisely for that reason, indeed, Spencer rejected the doctrine of personal immortality; and, although he afterwards came to find in the notion of a spirit surviving its mortal body the very root of religion itself, it did not occur to him that his pretended reconciliation of religion with science was thereby ruined at its base.

On the religious side, also, difficulties no less serious opposed themselves to the proffered alliance. Worship has always had for its object not an abstraction or a negation, but a living, concrete individual, conceived as resembling the highest types of humanity; while religious belief, so far from being directed towards an Unknowable, habitually appeals for confirmation to a revelation of its object, given through a book, or a community, or a set of mysterious intimations whose import it is the office of a privileged order to declare.

Some years after the appearance of *First Principles,* Professor Huxley, a friend and admirer of Spencer's, coined the word "Agnosticism" to designate the attitude of himself and his school towards theology. As originally used, it served to connote at once the impassable barrier that separated

them from all the Churches, and the almost imperceptible shading that distinguished them from the followers of Bradlaugh. Like all very popular party-names, Agnosticism paid the penalty of success by losing the perfectly definite meaning it was at first intended to convey, and by becoming associated with all sorts of hazy scepticisms which the original Agnostics would have been the first to disown. An impression has thus been created that those who reject the popular religion have no alternative but a comprehensive profession of ignorance about themselves and the world in which they live. An older and somewhat less ambiguous word, "Rationalism," has been coming into more favour of recent years to denote the position of those who trust their reason so far as it goes, while refusing to believe any proposition on evidence that would not be admitted in natural science or in the affairs of common life, and absolutely rejecting what is inconsistent either with itself or with any truth generally acknowledged as such.

A *History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism*, by the late Mr. Lecky, published in 1865, did much to promote a better appreciation among English readers of what reason has done to further the happiness of mankind by insensibly undermining the credence once given to various noxious superstitions. Lecky was not himself a deep or a logical thinker, and his dependence on authority is the reverse of rational; but his suave and conciliatory style did much to procure an entry for Buckle's ideas in circles which Buckle's extremely plain speaking had tended to alienate and alarm.

Lecky called himself a Christian, and no doubt he could claim the title with as good a right as many Broad Churchmen. The same may be said of the late Sir John Seeley, whose most celebrated work, *Ecce Homo,* also appeared in 1865. In form a survey of the life and work of Christ, the book is in reality a brilliant adaptation of the Gospel to modern Liberal politics, with nearly the whole supernatural element left out and Comte's religion of humanity dexterously put in its place. Some of the very elect were, perhaps not unwillingly, deceived, and Gladstone for one was so delighted with *Ecce Homo* and so satisfied with its orthodoxy that he afterwards made the author—who never put his name to it—Professor of Modern History at Cambridge. Lord Shaftesbury, on the other hand, said it was "vomited from the jaws of hell," which, if hell meant Positivism, was a rather strong way of stating a fact.

We have now reached a point of English history where the current of democratic opinion set going by the American War combines with the profounder current of religious liberalism to initiate and carry through the great legislative reforms by which the next five years are signalised.

Chapter XIII.

A STUDY IN EXPLOSIVES

The House of Commons which placed Lord Palmerston in power after the General Election of 1859 counted a nominal Liberal majority of fifty and a working Ministerial majority, on decisive party divisions, of less than twenty. Yet the veteran leader played the game with such skill that his administration is remembered as the most powerful and popular of the reign. The elections of July, 1865, gave him one last triumph, resulting as they did in a gain of twenty-five seats, counting fifty on a division. But the battle had been fought largely on the question of Parliamentary Reform, which he disliked, and on the merits of his Financial Minister, Gladstone, whose policy he viewed with extreme distrust. And what in the last resort told most decisively for Liberalism was the victory, in America, of the Northern Anti-slavery cause, to which Palmerston and Gladstone had been alike opposed. Not only had a democratic Republic, representing, as by this time was generally admitted, a most righteous cause, overcome at the cost of enormous sacrifices the most formidable rebellion known to history, but it had also treated the vanquished rebels with a magnanimity of which history offered no example.

Besides this general reaction on English opinion, the American War exercised other more indirect

effects on our domestic politics. It greatly strengthened a secret society known as the Fenian Brotherhood, formed for the purpose of making Ireland an independent State. Fenianism had begun in 1858, but attracted little attention until it enlisted American support. The constant stream of Irish emigration across the Atlantic would in any case have given Irish Nationalism a powerful body of sympathisers in the United States; and the experiences of war taught sympathy to assume a more aggressive shape. Many Irishmen had served in the Northern armies, where they acquired habits of military discipline; and some of these, when the restoration of peace threw them out of employment, made their way home to join the Fenian movement, which under their direction quickly developed into a formidable conspiracy against English rule. Their agitation had little success in promoting insurrection, but much success in drawing the attention of Great Britain to the chronic grievances of the sister island.

Of these grievances the most intelligible to English and Scotch opinion was the existence of a Protestant Establishment among a Catholic people, the fact that nearly all the religious endowments of the country went to relieve a small and comparatively wealthy minority from the duty of maintaining their religion at their own expense, as the Presbyterians and the Catholics were for the most part obliged to do. We have seen how that very moderate concession to religious justice known as the Appropriation Clause was successfully resisted in the House of Lords thirty years before, probably because it excited no enthusiasm

among the English people. But now, thanks no doubt to the great Freethought movement of the previous decade, English Dissenters and Scotch Presbyterians, formerly so bigoted in their hostility to Rome, were ready to join hands with Irish Catholics in demanding the destruction of Protestant ascendancy in Ireland. These religionists would have maintained with complete sincerity that modern science and modern criticism had left their faith stronger than ever. But it remained true that the effect of Rationalism had been to make sectarian differences count for less in the face of a common danger than the fundamental principles on which all Christians were agreed.

By a still more remarkable change of opinion, not only the English Nonconformists, but some High Churchmen also, had come to approve in principle of Irish Disestablishment. Foremost among these stood Gladstone, destined before long to make it the first article in the Liberal programme. The mere suspicion of such a possibility led to his rejection as her representative by the University of Oxford at the General Election of 1865; but on that occasion he received the support of John Keble, whose Assize Sermon had started the Tractarian Movement thirty-two years before, and who had so strongly resented Earl Grey's suppression of ten superfluous Irish bishoprics. More significantly still, in conversation with J. H. Newman about the much more drastic course anticipated from Gladstone, Keble whispered, "And is not that just?" We must suppose that the Tractarian leaders had advanced so far towards

Rome and away from Evangelicalism as to be favourably disposed to what would benefit Irish Catholics at the expense of Irish Evangelicals. And this was because Newman had taught them to look to Rome as a bulwark against the rising rationalism of the age.

The overthrow of the Slave Power and the abolition of slavery over the whole territory of the United States was followed within six months by a negro outbreak in Jamaica. So far as I know, these two events have never been brought into relation as cause and effect. But it seems not unlikely that there was some connection between them, for the immense importance given to the negro race by the war can hardly have failed to react on the coloured population of Jamaica, rousing them to a keener sense of the wrongs, real or imaginary, under which they suffered, and exciting hopes of redress, to be won, if necessary, by armed force. At any rate, on October 11th, 1865, a riot took place at Morant Bay. Eighteen white men were killed, thirty-two were wounded, and two houses were burned down. Edward John Eyre, governor of the island, at once proclaimed martial law, and launched his soldiers on the black population of the disaffected district, apparently with a free hand to commit whatever atrocities they pleased. For every white man killed more than twenty blacks were executed; for every white man wounded nearly twenty blacks, some of them women, were flogged. In one place the tails of the cat were twisted and knotted with wires. A thousand native houses were burned down. Owing

to the summary character of the proceedings, various persons were executed whose participation in the riot could not be proved. Indeed, some negroes were shot down merely because they ran away from the troops. On October 30th, by Eyre's own admission, the insurrection had been thoroughly crushed. Yet martial law with all its horrors was allowed to continue for nearly a fortnight longer. Finally a coloured man named Gordon, a member of the House of Representatives, accused without adequate proof of having instigated the insurrection, was judicially murdered by Eyre's express orders, at a time when the case might have been reserved for a regular trial without any danger to the English inhabitants of the island.

Lord Palmerston died while these events were in progress. Had he lived, he would probably have supported and rewarded Governor Eyre; nor by doing this would he have forfeited any popularity in the country—at least among the bulk of the upper and middle classes, who looked on black men as entitled to no more consideration than gorillas. But with his departure a new *régime* had already begun. Earl Russell, who succeeded to the Premiership, and Gladstone, who succeeded to the leadership of the House of Commons, whatever their private opinions about Eyre might be, were under the necessity of not alienating the Radical section of their party, in view of the Reform Bill they intended to introduce; nor was there any doubt about the attitude of that section on the present occasion. No sooner had detailed accounts of the atrocities perpetrated in

Jamaica begun to come in than a demand for immediate inquiry into the conduct of the responsible parties was raised by Radical politicians and journalists, supported by some of the most advanced thinkers of the age. Under pressure from this quarter Eyre was first suspended and then recalled, after a Commission sent out to collect information on the spot had brought to light the full extent of the enormities to which his sanction had been given.

An unofficial committee was formed for the purpose of having Eyre's guilt or innocence decided in the only regular manner—by putting him on his trial before an English Court of Justice. At its head stood John Stuart Mill, then at the zenith of his reputation and of his intellectual powers. His *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy,* published in the spring of 1865, had destroyed the authority of the reactionary Scotch metaphysician at a single blow, ruining at the same time the elaborate framework of sceptical sophistry by which Hamilton's Oxford disciple, Mansel, had tried to prop up the immoral dogmas of popular Christianity. He had also recently brought out a volume on Auguste Comte, giving a luminous summary of the great French thinker's system, and distinguishing with rare ability and impartiality between the truths and errors that it embodies. He had been returned to Parliament free of expense for Westminster, as of all reasoners the most competent to defend a wide extension of the suffrage against the redoubtable attacks of Robert Lowe, who, although himself on all other points a strong Liberal, had been adopted by the

Tories as their spokesman in the coming conflict on Parliamentary Reform.

Around Mill, as members of the Jamaica Committee, were grouped such men of light and leading in the spheres of thought and action as Darwin, Spencer, Wallace, Professor Huxley, Professor Goldwin Smith, Leslie Stephen, and Mr. Frederic Harrison. But, as usually happens in England, the intellectualists were by no means unanimous. Carlyle, who hated the negro race, gave the support of his irrelevantly picturesque rhetoric to Governor Eyre. Tennyson, Ruskin, Froude, Kingsley, Murchison, and Tyndall more or less openly took the same side. On the whole, the division of opinion as regarded the Jamaica question corresponded to the division on the American War, and, like that, indicated a conflict between two widely divergent ideals of society—more than that, between two different theories of the world ; for, as Herbert Spencer has observed, "the evolutionists, considering their small number, contributed a far larger proportion to the committee than any other class."[1]

So strong was the feeling in favour of Eyre that the Jamaica Committee failed in their efforts to put him on his trial, although Lord Chief Justice Cockburn charged the Old Bailey Grand Jury strongly against him. But, as Mill says, their efforts "gave an emphatic warning to those who might be tempted to similar guilt hereafter that, though they might escape the actual sentence of a criminal tribunal, they were not safe against being

[1] *Autobiography*, vol. ii., p. 143.

put to some trouble and expense in order to avoid it."[1]

In addition to the Fenian and Jamaican troubles, the new Government had to deal with a more immediate difficulty—the cattle plague, a destructive pestilence for which no remedy could be found except the slaughter of the diseased animals, and of those exposed to the risk of infection. Accordingly, when Parliament met a Bill was introduced prescribing this drastic remedy against the spread of the plague, and awarding an amount of compensation to the owners of the animals sacrificed suited rather to the interests and wishes of a land-owning oligarchy than to the just claims of the people at large, who were already suffering severely by a great rise in the price of meat. An absurdly high amount of compensation was assigned in the first Ministerial proposal, and two-thirds of the sum were to be provided by a local rate, one-third only being raised by a special tax on cattle. Thus the owners would be paid twice over—first by the legal indemnity, and then by the rise in prices. Against this iniquitous arrangement Mill protested in a speech which drew down on him the bitter hatred of the whole Tory party, and of not a few lukewarm Liberals into the bargain. His recommendations were not fully adopted, but they had the effect of reducing the proposed compensation by a considerable amount.

While the questions associated with Ireland,

[1] *Autobiography*, p. 299.

Jamaica, and the cattle plague greatly aggravated the difficulties and responsibilities of the Russell-Gladstone Government, they also made the tension between the respective representatives of advanced and of conservative opinion more acute, thus adding enormously to the virulence of party feeling on the issue in which all other differences were soon to be swallowed up—the issue of Parliamentary Reform. The newly-elected House of Commons included a much larger proportion of serious reformers than its predecessor, and the two chief Ministers were convinced advocates of popular suffrage. They brought in a Bill which would have given votes to 144,000 working men, together with a much larger number of middle-class householders. Mill, Bright, and the Radicals generally gave this exceedingly mild proposal a warm support; but the mere fact of their approval seemed to awaken a corresponding strength of opposition on the other side, recalling the passionate hostility evoked by the Reform Bill of 1831, and backed by arguments of much the same description, amounting to a general claim that our representative system was working admirably, and could not be improved.

This general objection to all change as such might not have counted for much, even with professed Conservatives, had it not been the expression of a more specific animosity towards the class whose partial enfranchisement was in contemplation. There was in 1866 among well-to-do people, more than at any time since the collapse of Chartism, a definite dread and hatred of the working classes, or at least of their Trade Unions,

which had been smouldering through the Palmerstonian period, and which, although partially alleviated by the experiences of the Cotton Famine, broke out again at the termination of the American War. In order to understand how this state of feeling came to exist we must go back to an earlier period of English industrial history; but the digression will not detain us long.

Previous to 1824 combinations to procure an increase of wages were more or less forbidden by law and punished as crimes. Among other consequences of the great Liberal movement begun soon after the accession of George IV., complete freedom of contract was obtained in that year, chiefly through the efforts of two Radicals, Francis Place and Joseph Hume. This concession led to an epidemic of strikes, frequently accompanied by rioting and outrage, with the result that in 1825 a new Bill was passed "prohibiting any person doing any act or making any threat to induce any manufacturer to alter the rules of his factory, or any workman to accept or leave any employment, or to join any club";[1] and this law continued in force for more than forty years. Nevertheless, the operatives continued to fight for an increase of wages or for shorter hours, with varying degrees of success, by means of strikes, which their Trade Unions proved highly efficacious instruments for carrying through. The masters retorted by lock-outs—that is to say, by refusing to employ men who, though consenting to work for the usual wages, either belonged to Trade Unions or were suspected

[1] Walpole, *History of England,* vol. ii., p. 181.

of contributing to the support of strikes. This sort of civil war raged with particular virulence after the commercial crisis of 1857, and led to a great pitched battle between employers and employed in the building trade, lasting from November, 1858, to February, 1860. On that occasion neither side succeeded in carrying its point, but the conflict left Trade Unionism in a stronger position than before.[1]

At that time "society," and indeed the educated classes generally, looked on strikes not only as a most disagreeable interruption to business, but also as a revolt against the natural law of supply and demand. They took this view on trust from the leading political economists, all of whom, including J. S. Mill, taught the existence of something that they called the Wages Fund—that is, "a sum of wealth unconditionally devoted to the wages of labour," and limited, "at any given moment, to a predetermined amount.....so that, the sum to be divided being fixed, the wages of each depend solely on the number of participants." Thus strikes could not possibly increase wages or prevent them from falling, although indirectly they might, and actually did, lower wages by diminishing the fund whence they were paid.[2]

By a singular inadvertence the economists long failed to observe that the employer's profits constituted an additional fund on which it was possible for his men to encroach to any extent short of what would leave him without a motive for carrying on

[1] Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, pp. 213–14.

[2] Mill, *Dissertations and Discussions*, vol. iv., pp. 43 *sqq.*

the business—a fact first pointed out by W. T. Thornton in 1869, and immediately accepted as true by Mill.

Working men naturally set little store on a science whose teachings were contradicted by experience before they were corrected by theory. One of the new members of Parliament, Thomas Hughes, the author of *Tom Brown's Schooldays,* who had been elected in the labour interest, speaking in the debate on the second reading of Gladstone's Reform Bill, vainly urged on his hearers the expediency of giving working men a share in the national representation, precisely because their views on the price of labour and the laws of supply and demand differed so widely from the middle and upper-class theory. The only effect of his arguments was to send votes over to the other side.

On the occasion of Lord Russell's previous abortive Reform Bills no enthusiasm had been shown for them by the unenfranchised masses, nor any anger when they failed; and this popular indifference furnished Conservatives on both sides of the House with a standing argument in favour of letting the subject sleep. In fact, the wage-earners had come to believe that their condition could be much more effectively bettered by means of Trade Unionism than by such a remote and feeble share in legislation as a tenth or so of the whole voting power would bestow. But the Parliamentary debates of 1866 totally changed their views. What was seen to be withheld with such alarm seemed to be worth demanding with equal passion on the part of those to whom it was denied;

and the more so as indications were not wanting of a desire to destroy the Trade Unions by Act of Parliament, and to deal with resistance to such a measure by suspending the Habeas Corpus Act, as in Ireland, or by proclaiming martial law, as in Jamaica.

I have said that the Parliament of 1865 included many more sincere reformers than its predecessor. But they numbered altogether less than half the whole House ; so that by allying themselves with every section of discontented Liberalism in turn the Tory Opposition at last succeeded in wrecking Gladstone's very moderate Bill. The Liberal Ministry at once resigned, and Disraeli (with Lord Derby as his nominal chief) took office for the third time, and retained it two years and a half by faithfully copying that policy of Conservative surrender on which he had poured such fierce sarcasm when Sir Robert Peel inaugurated it less than a quarter of a century before, without Peel's justification that his change of policy was necessary for the safety of the country.

As Leader of the House of Commons Gladstone had failed utterly ; but his fall made him a popular hero, and his name became a rallying cry for the new enthusiasm on behalf of Reform which had spread from the North to London. He had told the opponents of his Bill that the working men were their own flesh and blood ; and the masses do not forget such words. Before the formation of a new Government had been officially announced crowds of working men were parading the streets of London with unmistakable indications of the

side on which their sympathies were enlisted. Three weeks later it was announced that a great Reform demonstration would be held in Hyde Park. Contrary to the advice of their Home Secretary, the Government closed the park gates against the meeting. On this the responsible leaders withdrew, leaving behind them, however, a disorderly crowd, who broke down the park railings, spread over the enclosure, and did much mischief to the flowers and shrubs. This rather childish exhibition proved no less effective for its purpose than the terrible riots at Bristol had been a generation before. On this occasion much more serious consequences might have happened, as a body called the Reform League summoned another meeting to be held in the park a few days afterwards, at a time when troops were being kept in readiness to prevent it. Mill, who could hardly have been mistaken on the subject, tells us that the League were only dissuaded from carrying out their intention by his remonstrances—a fact which all the historians of the period but one have passed over in silence.[1]

During the subsequent autumn and winter the working men adopted a more efficacious and less dangerous method of showing their opinions, by marching through the streets of London in long processions, among which those organised by the Trade Unions made the most conspicuous figure. The men who walked in these processions presented such a well-to-do appearance that the spectators who watched them from the club windows asked

[1] Mill's *Autobiography,* pp. 190–1. Herbert Paul, *Modern England,* vol. iii., p. 55.

one another in surprise, Was it possible these people could not afford to live in a ten-pound house? Such may, in fact, have been their rental; but as a class their interests obviously led them to combine with the householders who paid less rather than with those who paid more than that modest sum.

Payment of a seven-pound rental had been the qualification for exercising the borough franchise fixed by Gladstone's Bill, and an amendment proposing to substitute a rating for a rental value was what finally wrecked it in Committee. The object in view was merely to diminish the number of new electors, as houses are habitually rated at a figure below their letting value. But the distinction between a rating and a rental franchise acquired a new significance when Disraeli introduced a Reform Bill of his own in the Session of 1867. After a variety of abortive schemes presented and withdrawn for the sole purpose of keeping his party in office, the Tory leader proposed a measure the most important provision of which gave the borough franchise to all householders rated for the relief of the poor. Now, as regarded the payment of rates there was no uniform rule in English boroughs as to whether it should be made by the householder or by his landlord. It was a question determined in each instance by the majority of the ratepayers themselves. The more general arrangement was that the landlord should pay, although, of course, he indemnified himself by raising the rent. In that case the tenant was called a compound householder. But there were certain boroughs where this arrangement did not exist, and there a rating franchise would have meant

Household Suffrage pure and simple. It was a piece of the grossest political hypocrisy to pretend, as Disraeli did, that such an accident determined a man's fitness or the contrary to join in the choice of a Parliamentary representative. Finally, to the great astonishment of both parties, the Tory leader found his way out of this ridiculous position by accepting the proposal of a Liberal member abolishing the compound householder, and directing that none but occupiers should be rated for the relief of the poor within the limit of Parliamentary boroughs. This amounted to unqualified Household Suffrage, which Disraeli had declared he would never accept. In what way the compound householder would become better fitted for the exercise of his new privilege by being subjected to the gratuitous inconvenience of paying his rates in person instead of by proxy did not appear. Nor, in fact, was he destined to benefit long by that magical operation. Two years subsequently the old system of compounding was quietly reinstated, without depriving the compounder of his vote.

Soon after passing his Bill, or rather the Bill forced on him by the Liberal Opposition, Disraeli described himself in a public speech as having educated the Conservative party to believe in democratic reform. Finding that the assertion provoked some murmurs, he first altered it into "we"—that is, Lord Derby and himself—"were educating the Conservative party," and finally into "the Conservative party were educating the country." In each version the claim can only be described as an impudent falsehood. So far from being educated by the Conservative party, the

country taught them, in unmistakable accents, that they must yield to its demands without delay. Lord Derby, who called Household Suffrage "a leap in the dark," never pretended to be convinced, still less to convince others, of its expediency. As for Disraeli himself, the only educator we can compare him to is the Faliscan schoolmaster of early Roman history who surrendered his young charges to Camillus. Three Secretaries of State, who may be taken as fairly representing what the party really thought, resigned rather than agree to a much more limited franchise than that ultimately accepted. One of them, the future Lord Salisbury, was credited with an article in the *Quarterly Review,* passionately denouncing what it called the Conservative surrender. As for the rank and file, they simply yielded to the obligations of party discipline and to the dread of a dissolution in case they refused to follow their chief.

If Disraeli expected his party to gain by the Tory Reform Bill, he was grievously mistaken. Their domestic policy suffered a crushing defeat on an appeal to the people in 1868; their foreign policy a defeat still more crushing in 1880. His dream of restoring the royal authority has not been fulfilled; his friends of the territorial aristocracy have yielded to considerable inroads on their dignities and proprietary rights; an entire branch of the Anglican Establishment has been lopped off, and its privileges as against Dissent have been sensibly curtailed. Tory statesmen, beginning with himself, have, it is true, enjoyed extensive terms of office; but this, which would have come

to pass under any suffrage, has been due to the mistakes and divisions of their opponents far more than to any popular preference for themselves; while any attempt to revive old Tory principles has met with speedy discomfiture on an appeal to the democratic vote. Even the office for whose tenure they held no sacrifice too great has had to be shared with dissentient Liberals, and the coalitions which, according to Disraeli, England does not love have been used to strengthen the position of those on whom the mantle of this modern Hebrew prophet has fallen.

Before the working classes could enter into possession of their new privileges the organisations that had led them to victory found their very existence put in peril. An outrage perpetrated at Sheffield in October, 1866, by order of a Trade Union, coming as it did after a long series of similar atrocities, excited public opinion to fresh manifestations of hostility against the system of which they were held to be the inevitable result, and led to the appointment of a Royal Commission for the investigation of the whole subject. Under promise of impunity certain witnesses were induced to come forward and give a circumstantial narrative of the crimes committed by themselves or at their instigation in order to compel non-unionist workmen "to join the Union or to punish them for their refusal." The means of coercion ranged from putting needles into the brick-makers' clay for the purpose of injuring their hands to blowing up their houses with gunpowder or shooting them dead. Sheffield had the worst record for outrages;

but Manchester and other places were not far behind.[1] Only a small minority of Trade Unions were implicated in these crimes; but the public indignation provoked by their disclosure extended itself to Unionism in general, and led the employers to hope for its abolition.

Meanwhile, the prosecution of a defaulting Trade Union treasurer had elicited an important legal decision from the Court of Queen's Bench. It appeared that the society which sought redress had no claim to protection against the embezzlement of its funds, the reason given being that its objects, if not actually criminal, were yet so far in restraint of trade as to render it an illegal association.[2] The same judgment applied equally to all the Trade Unions in the country, classing them with illegal associations, and placing their funds—which, in the aggregate, amounted to a quarter of a million—at the mercy of their dishonest employees.[3]

Fortunately for their cause, the Trade Unions had enlisted the support of the English Positivists, a small band of high-minded, able, and eloquent thinkers, who had recently formed themselves into a society for the propagation of Auguste Comte's teaching in England. Unlike Mill, G. H. Lewes, and Harriet Martineau, these new disciples did not stop short at the intellectual side of Positivism, but dwelt also and more particularly on its religious and ethical aspects. Without being in any way affected by Comte's theories, or indeed by French influences of any kind, Trade Unionism appealed to

[1] Molesworth, *History of England,* vol. iii., pp. 370–75.
[2] Webb, *History of Trade Unionism,* p. 245.
[3] *Ibid.,* p. 246.

these men as a practical and efficacious protest against the anarchic individualism of the orthodox political economy, which Comte also regarded with extreme disfavour. While joining in the general condemnation of the Sheffield outrages, two members of the Positivist Society, Professor Beesly and Dr. Richard Congreve, had not hesitated to brave the public opinion of the upper classes by placing them in the same category of crimes with the atrocities perpetrated by Governor Eyre and his confederates in Jamaica. Another Positivist, Mr. Frederic Harrison, author of the article on "Neo-Christianity," in the *Westminster Review,* which first revealed the full meaning and significance of *Essays and Reviews*, had so thoroughly won the confidence of the Unionist leaders that they obtained his appointment to a place on the Royal Commission for inquiring into the facts of Trade Unionism. While holding that position he, in conjunction with Thomas Hughes, already mentioned as the Parliamentary champion of labour, conducted the Trade Union case against its opponents. Without being able to persuade the majority of the Commissioners to adopt their view in its entirety, they succeeded in dissipating some prejudices against the Unions; while their Minority Report, described as "a complete charter of Trade-Union liberty," "became for seven years the political programme of the Trade Unionists."[1] "It advocated the removal of all special legislation relating to labour contracts, on the principle, first, that no act should be illegal if committed by a

[1] Webb, *History of Trade Unionism,* p. 255.

workman unless it was equally illegal if committed by any other person; and, secondly, that no act by a combination of men should be regarded as criminal if it would not have been criminal in a single person."[1]

With a view to getting this programme passed into law, Mr. Harrison strongly urged on the newly-enfranchised working men the importance of registering themselves as voters and pledging candidates to support their interests in Parliament. We shall see hereafter what were the fruits of this agitation. In the meantime it will be instructive to note a good effect of the Reform Act independent of any actual change in the labour laws. By conferring political equality on the working men it raised them in the estimation of the masters, and enabled the two to sit side by side on boards of conciliation. "The employers used to say that it would degrade them to sit at the same board with their workmen; but it is noticeable that directly the political independence of the latter was recognised, as soon as he *(sic)* possessed the franchise, these objections began to disappear."[2]

English public opinion—or at least the public opinion of the governing classes—habitually yields to violence what it will not yield to reason. The raid on Hyde Park had won Reform; the Sheffield murders had drawn attention to the claims of labour; Fenian outrages were now to procure a certain measure of redress for the wrongs of Ireland. In September, 1867, two Fenians on their way to prison in Manchester were rescued by a band of

[1] Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 254.
[2] Arnold Toynbee, *The Industrial Revolution*, p. 149.

armed men, and the police sergeant who had charge of the van conveying them was shot dead —an offence for which the murderer himself and two others were hanged. Three weeks after their execution an attempt was made to rescue two other Fenians from Clerkenwell by blowing up the prison wall with gunpowder. The attempt failed, but twelve persons were killed and a hundred and twenty others injured by the explosion. Disraeli, who since February, 1868, had become in name as well as in reality Prime Minister, replied by a fresh suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act in Ireland, and by an Irish Reform Bill giving the franchise to only half as many electors in proportion to the population as in England. Then his great rival seized the opportunity to rally the whole Liberal party, which alike in office and opposition had broken from his lead on the Reform question, round the standard of religious equality. Before the end of March Gladstone began his campaign against the Irish Church, and on the morning of May 1st he carried a resolution advising its disestablishment and disendowment by a majority of 65. Thirty-one years earlier the far milder proposals known as the Appropriation Clause had been carried by a majority of only 33.[1] This significant advance, as I have already taken occasion to point out, is an index of the ground gained by rationalism in the interval. And, as if to supply a further confirmation of the same momentous change, an Act for the abolition of compulsory Church rates was carried in the same Session by

[1] Spencer Walpole, *History of England,* vol. iv., p. 21.

the same statesman, who had begun life as a champion of ecclesiastical privilege.

Nor was this only a Parliamentary, a political, or a Nonconformist victory. The approaching fall of the Irish Establishment was welcomed with acclamation by the intellectual and literary classes, who also disdainfully rejected the old Whig idea, now once more put forward, of concurrent endowment—that is, the distribution of the confiscated revenues among the three Irish Churches in proportion to their numerical strength. In their opinion the time had gone by for subsidising religious teaching in any form, for that would be merely building up what at no distant period would have to be pulled down again.

It only remained to ascertain by an appeal to the country what the newly-enfranchised classes thought on the subject. Their answer came in figures whose meaning could not be doubted. Household Suffrage in the English boroughs returned a great Liberal majority. Scotland, the best educated part of the United Kingdom, returned a Liberal majority of five to one. The Liberal majority in the whole House was 120. Mill's defeat at Westminster nearly consoled the Tories for this tremendous disaster. But the great philosopher's work was done. During his brief Parliamentary career Mill had done England a service not easily matched among the achievements of private members. In a single speech of remarkable eloquence he convinced Gladstone, and eventually Gladstone's pupil Stafford Northcote, that a provision should be made for paying off the National Debt while our resources are still available for the

purpose. England's prosperity depends on the productivity of her coalfields, and it is certain that these will be exhausted within a measurable period of time. It is, therefore, desirable to clear off our present liabilities before that fatal moment arrives. There may be stronger arguments for establishing a Sinking Fund than this; but none have so stimulated the imagination of statesmen as Mill's appeal on behalf of posterity, urged with impressive dignity on the House of Commons more than forty years ago. Immediately on the delivery of his speech a considerable sum was set aside for the reduction of the Debt; and from the second year after his death, which took place in 1873, a regular provision for its progressive extinction has formed part of our financial system.

Chapter XIV.

TRANSFERS OF POWER

When the verdict of the new constituencies had been declared, Disraeli set the excellent example of resigning before Parliament met, and Gladstone was charged for the first time with the formation of a Government. His Ministry contained an exceptionally large proportion of untitled ability, thus indicating the class whence the agents of the new Sovereign were likely more and more to be chosen. The new Administration brought with it a mandate for the disestablishment and disendowment of the Irish Church; and to this work the Session of 1869 was principally devoted.

Of the funds set free by disendowment too large a proportion found its way into the pockets of persons whose claims could not compare with those of the peasantry, by whose labour the amount of wealth disposable had been originally created. If English Church property should ever be resumed by the community, which is its rightful heir, we may hope that such jobbery will be avoided, and that the sum accruing after all vested interests have been equitably, and no more than equitably, provided for will be used to pay off a part of the National Debt, setting free a corresponding amount of the revenue to meet whatever increased expenditure the defence of the country or the furtherance of its happiness may demand.

It need hardly be mentioned that Irish discontent did not disappear, any more than after Catholic Emancipation, because another instalment of justice had been conceded; nor, indeed, was it desirable that the wrongs still unredressed should be so easily condoned. Nevertheless, the survivors of that period have no reason to regret the policy they then pursued. Had the battle against privilege been fought on some less intelligible issue, the whole fabric of injustice might have remained intact until the agitation for Irish self-government swelled to an irresistible height. In the opinion of many political thinkers, this would have been no misfortune; but, without entering on the general merits of the radical solution they favour, it should suffice to recall that an independent Irish Parliament, legislating under priestly dictation, would probably have begun its work by handing over the spoils of the Protestant Establishment to the Bishops and clergy of the Roman Church, with little or no regard to the vested interests of their former possessors. And, in the opinion of all who are opposed on principle to ecclesiastical endowments, such a disposition would have been far more objectionable than the arrangements actually made, however open to criticism these may be.

To the mass of the Irish people Protestant ascendancy was a less terrible grievance than the conditions of land tenure. Farms, as a rule, were let on yearly tenancies; improvements were habitually made by the tenants and habitually confiscated by the landlords; even tenants who paid their rent regularly were liable to be evicted and

replaced by others who undertook to pay a higher rent. In Ulster alone tenant farmers possessed, by the custom of the country, a right of property in the goodwill of their holdings, which, when the land was relet, they could sell for a substantial sum to the new occupier; but this custom was not recognised by law.

A Bill, introduced in February, 1870, proposed to deal with these grievances by giving the Ulster custom force of law, by extending it to the whole of Ireland, and by providing that the tenant, in case of eviction, should be compensated for improvements made by him, the insertion of any proviso to the contrary in leases being forbidden. Bright as a private member, and Mill in a pamphlet entitled *England and Ireland* (1868), had proposed the partial buying out of the landlords, and the sale of their estates on easy terms to the occupiers, as the most satisfactory solution of the land question. Bright was now a Cabinet Minister; and in deference to his authority clauses were introduced into the Irish Land Bill directing advances of public money to be made for the purpose of enabling tenants to buy their holdings in cases where the landlords were willing to sell. Gladstone, who framed and conducted the measure, had no belief in peasant proprietors, and Bright was disabled by illness from pushing his favourite scheme; nor did the purchase clauses prove adequate to carry it out. It is, however, interesting to observe that two such men as Mill and Bright, one of them representing the Benthamite school of philosophy and the other the Manchester school of politics, should have abandoned the traditions of *laissez-*

faire in favour of State intervention for the purpose of giving the poor advantages which, under a system of free competition and free contract, they had been unable to secure.

The same Session that saw the first considerable attempt to interfere with economic freedom in reference to Irish land tenure saw also a much more sweeping interference with the economic laws of supply and demand in their relation to the elementary education of the English people. It will be remembered that State aid to education first began after the Reform Act of 1832, and that it then took the form of money grants to voluntary associations whose interest in the subject was chiefly religious. Under this system the number of schools built, and of children attending them, steadily increased. But it fell far short of the whole number wanted; and the quality of the instruction given was not satisfactory. With a view to its improvement, Robert Lowe, who practically controlled the Education Department from 1859 to 1864, introduced what was called the system of payment by results—that is to say, the amount of money granted to the State-aided schools was made to depend on the number of children whose proficiency in the elementary subjects suited to their age or standing was such as to satisfy the Government inspectors.

Lowe's standards only took secular knowledge into account; and this sort of testing gave great offence to the clerical school managers, whose interest did not lie with the three R's, but with a fourth R—namely, religion, which was not allowed

to count for anything in the qualifying examinations. Under the lead of Lord Robert Cecil, afterwards so famous as Lord Salisbury, the Parliamentary obscurantists drove Lowe from office, not much, as would seem, to the displeasure of his colleagues, on whom he revenged himself by wrecking their Reform Bill in 1866. On the passing of Household Suffrage he uttered the famous apophthegm, "We must educate our masters." And now, as Chancellor of the Exchequer in Gladstone's Ministry, he belonged to a Government with an unrivalled opportunity for redeeming that obligation.[1]

They did not show themselves altogether equal to the situation. W. E. Forster, the Minister charged with preparing the new Education Bill, was not a statesman of high intellect or wide views. But as an educational enthusiast, not belonging to any religious denomination, he had the advantage of most of his colleagues, and was in some ways a more advanced reformer than the Prime Minister himself. His Bill marked a considerable improvement on the existing system. It provided that the denominational schools in receipt of State aid should henceforth be subject to undenominational inspection, and that no child who attended such schools should be forced to receive religious instruction of which its parents disapproved. This

[1] Lowe had begun life as an Oxford coach, but he had no practical knowledge of elementary teaching, and his system of payment by results exercised a most baneful influence on the schools, where it greatly stimulated cramming, and led to the treatment of children as machines for obtaining increased grants. This, however, does not alter the fact that he fell on the question of religious *versus* secular education.

provision, known as the Conscience Clause, had been first proposed by the Education Department in 1853; but, owing to the violent resistance of the Church managers, had not been insisted on until 1864. It was now re-enacted under a more stringent form, and definitely accepted in principle by the bigots who had fought against it so long. Where no efficient schools existed, Boards were to be created with power to levy rates "either to assist voluntary schools or to establish schools of their own."[1] And, subject of course to a Conscience Clause, they were free to settle what form of religious instruction should be followed, or even to order that none should be given. In addition to what they drew from the rates, the new schools were to receive a grant from the Consolidated Fund, and the children attending them were to pay a small fee. Finally, the Boards might enforce the attendance of all children whose education was not otherwise provided for, but they were not bound to enforce it. Forster himself would have preferred absolute compulsion; but he had the majority of the Cabinet against him.[2]

It will be seen that the Bill, as at first framed, while in some ways restricting the evils of the sectarian system, in other ways perpetuated and extended them. The outrageous provision enabling the School Boards to have whatever religion they chose taught at the public expense was, indeed, subsequently withdrawn, and replaced by the famous Cowper-Temple clause, directing that in rate-supported schools "no catechism or religious

[1] Sir H. Craik, *The State in its Relation to Education,* p. 92.
[2] H. Paul, *Modern England,* vol. iii., p. 216.

formulary distinctive of any particular denomination shall be taught";[1] while the Boards themselves, instead of being appointed by the vestries or other local bodies, as had been originally provided, were handed over to direct popular election. On the other hand, the denominational schools, which in practice were mostly Church schools, continued to be subsidised by the Exchequer, and the subsidy was even raised from one-third to one-half of the total cost; besides which, "by the twenty-fifth clause, School Boards were enabled to pay in denominational schools the fees of parents who, though not paupers, were unable to pay them."[2] "Training schools were left mostly in the hands of the sects, so that almost the only teachers to be procured by the model unsectarian schools were persons brought up in the lines of active sectarianism."[3]

What made the new lease of life given to the old system not only a theoretical injustice, but also a great practical mischief, was the proved inefficiency of the denominational schools. This had been brought to light by the requirements of Lowe's Revised Code, with its system of payment by results. To pass in its highest standard "a child must be able to read with fluency and expression, to write a short letter, and to work rule-of-three sums and fractions." Now, "of the two million children on the school registers in 1872 only 8,819 passed without failure in the three

[1] Elementary Education Act, 32 and 34 Vic., clause 14.

[2] Spencer Walpole, *History of Twenty-five Years,* vol. ii., p. 410.

[3] John Morley, *The Struggle for National Education,* p. 15.

subjects."[1] And this highest standard, that so few could succeed in, was "below the lowest Saxon, Prussian, or Swiss standard, even for the country schools." Where we had never passed 20,000 children in one year, Prussia, with a smaller population, passed nineteen times that number every year.[2]

Such, according to Mr. Morley, was "the consequence of entrusting public money.....to little knots of managers" engrossed in the interests of "their sect and its dogmas and shibboleths."[3]

The inspectors of training schools for teachers had to report a similar range of deficiencies higher up in the educational scale. The pupils acquitted themselves creditably in Holy Scripture, but fell below the mark in English grammar, mental arithmetic, and penmanship. The object was to make them "not only religious people, but sound Church people"; to impress them with the idea that "'there is no more effective way of benefiting their fellow-creatures than by giving them a sound education in the theology of the Church of England.'"[4]

At no time would the pretensions of the Church of England to control popular education have been tolerated by Dissenting or Secularist Liberals. Least of all could they be tolerated at a time when the most active and influential section of the Church's members were working, without disguise, to remodel her doctrines on Roman Catholic lines,

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 24–25.
[2] *Ibid*, p. 25 (quoting Mundella).
[3] *Ibid*, p. 24.
[4] *Ibid*, pp. 35–37.

exalting the pretensions of the priesthood, introducing the practice of private confession, and exhibiting sacramentalism as the very essence of religion. Their efforts were connected by an unbroken continuity of teaching with the Tractarian and Puseyite movement, on which they had made no essential advance. But they had given it a new and telling advertisement by appearing at the altar in garments of wonderful cut and colour, known as vestments, supposed to have the sanction of ancient ecclesiastical practice, but of very doubtful legality or good taste when donned by ministers of the reformed Anglican communion, and flaunted before congregations assembled to worship in the manner prescribed by the rubrics of the reformed Anglican Establishment. Some of these Ritualists, as they were called, openly advocated reunion with Rome; others went over to her communion; all were, not without reason, popularly regarded as the most efficacious propagandists of her faith. Now, it so happened that, at the very time when the Education Bill was under discussion, an Ecumenical Council, assembled for the purpose, was preparing to sanction by its decrees the Pope's claim to infallibility in questions of faith and morals—a claim which, as understood at the time, would give dogmatic authority to a protest against religious toleration recently issued by the reigning Pontiff, Pius IX.

But for the personal preferences of Gladstone and Forster, a much more satisfactory settlement of the education question might well have been carried in the most Liberal House of Commons the nineteenth century was destined to see; and

had it been rejected by the Lords—which seemed unlikely—an appeal to the constituencies would have sent the same majority back in triumph to Westminster. Parliament showed its true temper plainly enough, not only by the disestablishment of the Irish Church, but also, and even more, by an Act enabling atheists to give evidence on their affirmation in courts of law, passed the same year, and by the abolition of religious tests at Oxford and Cambridge, passed in 1871. It had been asserted with confidence not many years before that English parents wished university education to remain exclusively in the hands of the clergy. Experience has shown that they are perfectly willing to entrust both their sons and daughters to lay tuition. And their supposed prejudice against secular elementary education is, to all appearances, an equally baseless assumption.

While the Gladstonian Government were alienating the most advanced section of their majority within and without Parliament, both the Government and the majority of the House of Commons were making enemies of the working men, to whom they owed their very existence. "At the beginning of 1869 Mr. Frederic Harrison had drafted a comprehensive Bill embodying all the legislative proposals of his minority report. This was introduced by Messrs. Hughes and Mundella; and, although its provisions were received with denunciations by the employers, it gained some support among the newly-elected members, and was strongly backed outside the House. The Liberal Government of that day and nearly all the members of the House

of Commons were still covertly hostile to the principle of Trade Unionism, and every attempt was made to burke the measure. But the Junta [a little band of leading Trade Union officials who acted as a Cabinet for the whole movement] were determined to make felt their new political power. From every part of the country pressure was put upon members of Parliament. A great demonstration of workmen was held at Exeter Hall, at which Messrs. Mundella and Hughes declared their intention of forcing the House and the Ministry to vote upon the hated measure. Finding evasion no longer possible, the Government abandoned its attitude of hostility, and agreed to a formal second reading upon the understanding that the Cabinet would next year bring in a Bill of its own. A provisional measure, giving temporary protection to Trade Union funds, was accordingly hurried through Parliament at the end of the session, pending the introduction of a complete Bill."[1]

Two years passed before the appearance of the promised Bill, and then it proved highly unsatisfactory. Complete legal recognition was, indeed, granted to the Unions ; but their means of action were seriously hampered. A series of judicial decisions, by which even peaceful picketing was made a crime, were re-enacted in a codified form, thus becoming "more uniformly effectual."[2] As a concession to the Unionists, this penalising provision was made into a separate Bill ; but it passed as such, and an amendment introduced by the Lords made the prohibition of peaceful picketing

[1] Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, pp. 258–59.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 263.

even more stringent, "watching and besetting by a single individual being made as criminal as watching and besetting" by a multitude.[1] Thus "almost any action taken by Trade Unionists to induce a man not to accept employment at a struck shop resulted, under the new Act, in imprisonment with hard labour."[2] Yet "Mr. Gladstone refused, in 1872, to admit that there was any necessity for further legislation, and utterly declined to take the matter up; and during that session" no member could be found "willing to introduce a Bill for the repeal of" the obnoxious law.[3]

In order to understand the reactionary attitude of even Liberal politicians towards the claims of working men we must once more turn our attention to Continental affairs.

Bismarck's high-handed intervention in Schleswig-Holstein, related in a former chapter, was merely a first step towards the unification of Germany under Prussian leadership. His next step was the expulsion of Austria from the German Confederation. To secure the neutrality of France, illusory promises of territorial aggrandisement were dangled before the eyes of her Emperor, whose faculties, never very considerable, had for some time past been undermined by disease and fatigue. Italy gave her alliance in exchange for the prospective cession of Venetia, which, with Rome, was alone wanting to complete her independence and unity. A campaign of a few days in Bohemia (June–July, 1866) laid the Hapsburg

[1] Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 266. [2] P. 268.
[3] Pp. 269–70.

monarchy prostrate at the feet of its rival; and, but for French jealousy, the great Prussian statesman's dream might have been at once realised. For the moment North Germany alone was permitted to unite in a new Confederation, to which, however, the South German States were bound by secret treaties of alliance in the event of a foreign war.

Napoleon III. came out of the crisis with a loss of prestige still further aggravated by the failure of his feeble attempts to obtain some of the promised compensation, which in this instance would have been no better than blackmail. Nor did his discomfitures end here. One of his schemes for giving France a sort of hegemony among the Latin races had been to set up an empire in Mexico under a creature of his own, the Austrian Archduke Maximilian. But the Mexicans did not want an Emperor; and the ruler thrust upon them could only be maintained by a French army of occupation. On the overthrow of the Southern Confederacy this army had to be withdrawn, as a French opposition speaker expressed it, "before an imperious gesture of the United States." Under pressure from his Clericalist supporters, whom also perhaps he felt bound in honour not to abandon, Maximilian kept up a hopeless struggle with the Republican forces for a year longer. In June, 1867, he fell into the hands of President Juarez, who, in accordance with the usual Spanish custom—a custom followed by Maximilian himself when in power—had him shot as a disturber of the peace. Had their positions been reversed, the Austrian filibuster would probably have inflicted the same fate on the Mexican patriot without offending European prejudices.

By a singular combination of misfortunes, a little before the tragedy of Queretaro was announced the French Emperor had seen himself defeated in a paltry scheme of annexation. By a private bargain with its titular sovereign, the King of Holland, he had hoped to possess himself of the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg, a detached fragment of the old Germanic Confederation, deriving importance only from the great fortress with which its little capital used to be crowned. Unfortunately, Prussia still kept the fortress garrisoned with her troops, and, on hearing of the bargain made behind her back, refused to let it pass into the hands of a rival Power. War seemed imminent, but was temporarily averted, chiefly through the exertions of Lord Stanley, the English Conservative Foreign Minister, who assembled a European Conference in London and persuaded both parties to submit their claims to its decision. It was agreed that the fortress should be demolished, and that the Grand Duchy should be constituted as a neutral and independent territory. But the real diplomatic victory remained with the conquerors of Sadowa, whose breechloaders Napoleon III. was evidently afraid to face.

In the autumn of the same year, 1867, Garibaldi, with the almost undisguised approval and support of the Italian Government, led his volunteers to an attack on Rome, whence the French garrison had been withdrawn some years previously on an understanding that Italy was to suspend her designs for its annexation, at least during the lifetime of the reigning Pope. Garibaldi was within reach of success when the arrival of a French force,

dispatched, as is believed, against the Emperor's will, arrested him on the field of Mentana. De Failly, the French commander, an incompetent Court favourite, discredited his piteous victory by adding to its announcement a phrase destined to everlasting infamy: "The chassepots have done wonders." By a second blunder this was published in the *Moniteur,* evidently as a petty defiance to Prussia, for the chassepot was a newly-invented breechloader with which the French army was being rapidly supplied in view of a future war for the conquest of the Rhine frontier.

As the power and prestige of the Empire declined the strength and confidence of its domestic enemies increased. In the Press, in the Legislature, even in the law courts, the attacks of the Liberal Opposition on the Government grew more frequent and fearless, its home and foreign policy equally giving occasion for damaging criticism, sometimes conveyed in a style of high literary finish. At length, in 1869, the elections to the Corps Legislatif, although they still left the Bonapartists in a great majority, showed a gain of so many seats by the united sections of Liberal opinion as to permit no doubt that, in the absence of official pressure on the electors, their verdict would have been cast for constitutional freedom, as under Louis Philippe—a result which may perhaps be partly credited to the parallel democratic movement across the Channel. Personally, the Emperor rather welcomed such a change, tending, as it did, to lighten the overwhelming burden of his responsibilities, and a Liberal Cabinet was installed in power with his full acquiescence. Many, however, among his

old supporters looked on the new departure with alarm, and set their hopes on a successful war with Prussia, leading to a substantial increase of French territory, as the only chance of preserving the dynasty when Napoleon, whose health was rapidly failing, should be gone.

In these circumstances Bismarck adopted a course which has been severely censured for its apparent unscrupulousness, but for which something may be said even on grounds of the highest political morality. Seeing that the dominant party in France—and, indeed, any party likely to take its place should there be a revolution—might be expected to make war, whenever it suited their convenience, for the disruption and spoliation of Germany, he determined to promote a conflict between the two countries at a time when Germany still stood far better prepared for it than her hereditary enemy. For this purpose, early in 1870 he secretly put forward a young Prince of the Hohenzollern family as a candidate for the Spanish throne, which had remained vacant ever since the overthrow of the Bourbon dynasty by a military revolution in September, 1868. Prim, the author of the revolution, and still practically dictator of Spain, accepted the German nominee, and would have imposed his choice on the Cortes had not the rulers of France, in complete accordance with Bismarck's previsions, intervened to forbid the Hohenzollern candidature immediately on its promulgation in July. Had the direct annexation of Spain to Prussia been contemplated, the language of the Emperor's representatives could not have been more violent. In point of fact, there neither

was nor could be any foundation for the affected alarm, the alliances of modern States not being determined by the family connections of their sovereigns; and Spain, of all European States, having the least motive for allying herself with a Protestant Power against Catholic France. The real grievance, if any, seems to have been that Spain, under a Liberal Government, would not have lent herself to the designs of the clerical party at the Tuileries. If we may trust a report current at the time, their plan was to replace the French expeditionary corps that had won Mentana by an equal number of Spanish troops, thus setting their own soldiers free for service on the Rhine in case of war. In this way the disagreeable alternative between abandoning Pius IX. or driving Italy into a second Prussian alliance would have been evaded. At any rate, on no imaginable contingency could it matter to France what became of the Spanish throne, unless some service was expected from its occupant in the event of a war to be fought at the imperial convenience for the disunion and dismemberment of Germany. And Germany's great leader had a perfect right to offer a challenge that none but an adversary bent on quarrelling would have taken up.

As it happened, the adversary found himself forced to fight on grounds that exhibited him much more completely in his true character of wanton aggressor and bully. In deference to public opinion, and at his father's desire, the Hohenzollern Prince withdrew his candidature. France scored a diplomatic victory; but the war party in the Emperor's councils continued to play Bismarck's

game. At their instance Benedetti, the French Ambassador to the Prussian Court, received instructions to demand a pledge from King William that the Prince's candidature should not be renewed on any future occasion. The King, who was at that time drinking the waters at Ems, refused to give any such pledge, refusing also, when his answer had been given, to hold any further communications on the subject with Benedetti during the short remainder of his stay at Ems. An account of these proceedings was telegraphed to Bismarck, then at his country seat with the Prussian generals Moltke and Roon as his guests. All three felt much disappointed at the pacific turn events seemed to be taking. According to his own account, Bismarck, by skilful compression, gave the King's message a rather more peremptory appearance than it really possessed, making it look as if William I. had altogether declined to discuss the question of future guarantees in a personal interview with the French Ambassador, which was not true. With the high approval of the two generals Bismarck then telegraphed his amended version of the Ems affair all over Europe. Whether by this bold stroke he really decided the question between peace and war may well be doubted, for the refusal of the last French demands would in any case have been far more effectual than a mere neglect of diplomatic forms in showing that the limits of concession had been reached—especially as the slightest inquiry would have shown that no breach of courtesy had, in fact, been committed; nor does it appear that the Empress Eugénie, who openly spoke of the war as her

work, needed any such trifling occasion to fix a purpose of which dynastic considerations were the sole determining motive.

Bismarck's skilful diplomacy had simply forced the French Empire to appear as what it really was, the aggressor. But for its desire to prevent the completion of German unity and to seize the Rhine provinces there would have been no war. And when the declaration of war came from Paris, the Prussian Minister excited still further prejudice against Napoleon III. by publishing the draft project of a treaty confidentially submitted to him in 1866 for the forcible annexation of Belgium to France, with a guarantee of Prussia's armed support against any Power opposing itself to this act of spoliation. The draft was in the handwriting of the Duc de Gramont, at that time French Ambassador at Berlin; and its genuineness, although long denied, is now admitted on all sides. Even in 1870 the Orleanist *Revue des Deux Mondes* saw nothing objectionable or surprising about the proposal, except that it should have been betrayed by Bismarck.

England, as the Power most interested in Belgian independence, was evidently the Power threatened with war by her imperial ally in the draft treaty, and her Government now hastened to guard against the danger by contracting a treaty with the two belligerents respectively, providing that, "if the armies of either violated the neutrality of Belgium, Great Britain should co-operate with the armies of the other for its defence."[1] Both

[1] Walpole, *History of Twenty-five Years*, vol. ii., p. 505.

Continental Powers eventually agreed to the treaty; but the delay of the French Government in accepting it, as compared with the alacrity of the Germans, suggested that their predatory designs were not yet entirely abandoned. In the opinion of John Stuart Mill, England might have prevented the whole war by threatening to fight the party, whichever it might be, that began hostilities—and in this he was almost certainly right; but the actual state of public morality would hardly have enabled the most popular Government to risk the responsibility of following his chivalrous suggestion.

Within a few weeks from the beginning of hostilities the whole fabric of French Imperialism, so adulated by the higher classes in England, had collapsed. Its legions had laid down their arms to the invader; the Emperor was a prisoner; the Empress and her son, to secure whose succession she had wrought such evils, were fugitives; the temporal power of the Pope had ceased to exist; Paris was surrounded by German armies; and the far-sighted patriots who had vainly protested against making war on such a frivolous pretext as the Ems telegram were vainly struggling under the name of a French Republic to save their country from the dismemberment entailed on it by twenty years of corruption and folly.

The first effect of this catastrophe on European politics was to allow the unification of Italy and of Germany to be completed. The next was to undo one of the results of the Crimean War. As a guarantee for Turkish independence, it had been provided in the Treaty of Paris that Russia should

only be allowed to keep a certain very limited number of warships in the Black Sea, and that the construction or maintenance of arsenals on its shores should be forbidden. The Czar now took advantage of France's prostration to give notice that he no longer considered himself bound by these humiliating restraints on his sovereign rights. In deference to English susceptibilities, it was arranged that a European Conference should be assembled to grant Russia a release from her treaty obligations—a ceremony that she would certainly have dispensed with had the release been refused. What was really the most important consequence of the Crimean War could not be undone by any Czar or any Conference. It stood plain to the eyes of all men in the shape of a united and victorious Germany, constituting a far more effective barrier to Russian ambition than any Black Sea Treaty. Still, the whole transaction proved highly injurious to the prestige of the Gladstone Government; and this impression was still further aggravated not long afterwards by the sentence of a Court of Arbitration condemning England to pay heavy damages for the loss inflicted on American shipping through the depredations of the *Alabama* and her consorts.

Meanwhile, the surrender of Paris brought the war to an end, and France accepted terms dictated by the conqueror. A National Assembly, elected by universal suffrage, succeeded the Government of National Defence imposed on the French people by the mob of Paris. But this Assembly, while it represented the desire of the country for peace, represented it in nothing else. A majority of the

members were Monarchists ; and, had it not been for their internal dissensions, a Bourbon Prince utterly out of sympathy with the ideas of modern France would have been placed on the vacant throne. The Parisian working men, already half-maddened by the privations of the siege, still retained the arms and the military organisation given them to be used against the invader. In a frenzy of rage, suspicion, baffled hopes, and Utopian dreams, they refused to obey the newly-constituted Government, drove its agents out of Paris, established a municipal reign of terror, and held the city against the armies of their own countrymen, under the eyes of a German garrison, until the tragedy closed seven weeks later in a carnival of blood and fire.

In France the Paris Commune—to give this abortive attempt at secularist municipalisation its historic name—nearly destroyed the new Republic. In England it not only revived the disdainful old commonplace that the French were unfit for a free government, but it also went far to counteract the democratic current set up by the Northern victory in the American War ; and this reaction told especially against Trade Unionism, with which the Commune was, rightly or wrongly, supposed to be in some way connected. A society called the "International Association of Working Men," having for its object to establish a system of mutual support and co-operation among the working men of different countries, came in for a most unwarranted amount of suspicion and abuse on this occasion ; and an idea gained ground, recalling upper-class opinion at the time

of the first French Revolution, that the events in Paris heralded the explosion of a vast European conspiracy against property and religion. This sudden panic may account both for the refusal of the Parliamentary Liberals to repeal the Criminal Law Amendment Act, and for the Conservative reaction which, in a few years, reduced the Gladstonian majority to two-thirds of the figure it stood at in 1869.

One more triumph, however, remained for the reforming Cabinet before it succumbed, inwardly and outwardly, to the forces of obscurantism and privilege.

English Radicalism had been identified in Palmerston's time with a policy of retrenchment and disarmament. Now, it might seem at first sight as if the results of the Franco-German War had removed a formidable objection to the application of the anti-militarist programme. For the constant source of our disquietude during Palmerston's last Ministry had been the proximity to our shores of a great military and naval Power, flushed with recent victories, and ruled by a despotic chief, heir to the traditions of the first Napoleon, and suspected of harbouring vindictive designs against England as his uncle's most inveterate enemy. But now, with the overthrow of the French Empire, it seemed as if all fears from that quarter must be dissipated. Absorbed in the work of recovering their old military position, our neighbours would for many years to come have something else to think of than provoking a naval contest with England. If they ever fought again, it would be

in the first instance with Germany for the recovery of the provinces torn away from them by the Treaty of Frankfort; and, in view of that conflict, on which they could not venture without allies, their obvious interest was to cultivate a good understanding with every other nation. With regard to Germany, only panic-mongers could then dream of her as a possible foe, except in the peaceful competitions of industry; indeed, as an effective counterpoise to Russia, her commanding European position seemed more fitted to reassure than to alarm us.

Plausible as such reasonings were, they fell to pieces before the broad fact that Austria and France had indulged in similar dreams of security, and that each had gone down at the first blow because she neglected to keep her military organisation on a level with the requirements of modern warfare. Neither event had been anticipated by political or military experts, nor could either be made a sure ground of prediction for the immediate future. One thing only impressed itself as the paramount condition of national integrity, and this was that the whole fighting power of the country should be held at the disposition of its responsible rulers for employment, if need be, at a week's notice in its defence.

Such was the ideal of Army reorganisation; and to this as near an approach as circumstances permitted was made by the ablest administrator in the Liberal Cabinet, the War Minister, Edward Cardwell, a statesman trained in the unrivalled school of Sir Robert Peel. Sprung like Gladstone from the commercial classes, and, like him, adorned with the highest University honours, Cardwell,

after filling various great offices of State with marked success, undertook the War Office in 1868. Next year his reforms began. He strengthened the home army by withdrawing a considerable number of regiments from the Colonies for service in the British Islands, while at the same time he brought the regular troops into organic connection with the Militia and the Volunteers. In 1870 he made some approach to the German system of short service. Under his predecessors the term of enlistment, originally for life, had been lowered first to twenty-one years, and then to twelve. Cardwell maintained this limit, but divided the term into two periods of six years each, the first to be spent with the colours and the second with the Reserves—an arrangement permitting the soldier's return in early life to some civil occupation. Those who enlisted in regiments destined for home service only might be passed into the Reserves after three years with the colours. It was hoped that in consequence of this change more recruits, and recruits of a better class, would be engaged. In the same year the army was for the first time placed entirely under the control of a responsible Parliamentary head, the Commander-in-Chief being definitely subordinated to the War Office.

In 1871, under the heightened stimulus of Continental example, Cardwell took a further step towards creating an efficient army—the most conspicuous and difficult, if not the most important, of all. He substituted promotion by seniority and merit for promotion by seniority and purchase. This reform is an instance of the beneficent influence exercised by Indian experience on

English administration. It had been first brought into the sphere of practical politics by Sir Charles Trevelyan, a veteran Anglo-Indian official, who also had a great share in opening the Civil Service to candidates chosen by competitive examination; and his son, the present Sir George Trevelyan, became an enthusiastic advocate of the same cause on entering Parliament in 1865, after a residence of six months in India.

Cardwell's scheme for the abolition of army purchase proved an expensive measure, as the existing officers had to be compensated not only for the legal, but also for the illegal, prices they had paid for their commissions. Now, although England is the richest country in Europe, if the continuance of an abuse saves public money, even at the risk of financially ruinous consequences at some future time, arguments against its abolition are always forthcoming; nor were they wanting on this occasion. Had the defenders of the purchase system on its merits been serious, they should have advocated its extension to the navy, the scientific army corps, and, indeed, to the whole public service.

On this as on other occasions the Lords made themselves the agents of plutocratic interests, and passed a wrecking amendment to Cardwell's Bill. Then, to the delight of their supporters in the Commons, the Government took advantage of the circumstance that army purchase had originally been created by Royal Warrant to abolish it by the same means, in defiance of privileged obstruction. Queen Victoria disliked promotion by merit, and did not like offending the Lords; but the habit

of obeying her Prime Minister and the pleasure of exercising her prerogative carried the day, and the barbarous custom of selling offices of trust was abolished by the equally barbarous instrumentality of a Royal Proclamation. Now, as after 1832, the extension of democracy brought with it a more unified authority, making for increased legislative and administrative efficiency.

Army reform was the last triumph of the Liberal Government. As already mentioned, they settled the *Alabama* question, but at the expense of paying an indemnity much in excess of what could be justly claimed for the depredations of the Birkenhead privateers. They passed a Ballot Bill, which, for some unexplained reason, seems to have benefited the Conservative more than the Liberal candidates. Their drink legislation made mortal enemies of the publicans, without doing much to check intemperance. Finally, in order to complete the pacification of Ireland, they proposed to establish a new Irish University without a Professor of Moral Philosophy, without a Professor of Modern History, and with a provision that such Professors as did exist should say nothing at which any of their pupils might think fit, on theological grounds, to take offence. A vote in favour of this grotesque proposal was described by one of the Liberal speakers as a vote of confidence in Cardinal Cullen and his priests. Unluckily for its authors, Cardinal Cullen had no confidence in the Bill. By his orders, or rather by the Pope's, the Irish Catholics voted against it on the second reading. Many Liberals joined in their defection, the whole

Conservative party threw its weight into the same scale, and the Bill was lost by a majority of three. Gladstone at once resigned, and the Queen sent for Disraeli, who, however, refused to take office, leaving his rival to drag out a few more months of discredited political existence.

In January, 1874, the Liberal leader dissolved Parliament on a promise to abolish the income-tax if he were returned to power. But income-taxpayers did not form a majority of the new electorate, and as a class they were more than satisfied with the amount of reform already secured, many even fearing that a new lease of Radicalism would leave them no income to be taxed. Dissenters and Secularists resented the re-endowment of Church schools. Trade Unionist working men were actively hostile to a Government which, against their earnest remonstrances, had passed the Bill making peaceful picketing a crime. Their remedy was to run Labour candidates in opposition to Liberals and Conservatives alike, with the result that in most cases where a triangular contest took place the Conservative won the seat. Working men of an inferior sort resented the actual or threatened restrictions on their opportunities for getting drunk. Thus, although the Conservatives were in a minority on the total poll, they secured a majority of at least fifty in the House of Commons, and that, too, a majority of the most obedient sort; while a large number of the Irish Liberals had been returned as Home Rulers, and might be expected to vote with exclusive regard to obtaining autonomy for their island.

Gladstone resigned before the new Parliament

met, and Disraeli accepted an office which, for the first time in his life, gave him power as well as place. But his ignorance of the English temper remained complete, and the commanding position he now filled merely gave him an opportunity for exhibiting that ignorance more conspicuously than ever before.

Chapter XV.

THE REVOLT OF LITERATURE AND SCIENCE

A period of Conservative reaction in politics is often, if not always, marked by a forward movement in Liberal ideas. We saw how Pitt's reign of terror coincided with a great outburst of speculative activity, and how Peel's triumph was similarly illustrated by the forward-looking thought of early Victorian literature and philosophy. A second and even higher wave of progress follows under the aging Palmerston's retrograde rule, and comes to a pause with the political re-awakening of 1865. Then a more rapid movement of ebb and flow makes itself felt. The Irish Church Bill marks a climax in political Liberalism; the Education Bill and the refusal of fair play to the Trade Unions betray a slackening of fibre in its official representatives, a weak concession to religious and social prejudices. But this temporary halt or retreat is more than compensated by advances in another field.

Matthew Arnold, himself the son of a great Liberal divine, had pushed, at an early age, his father's innovating method to the acceptance of modern pantheism in its most outspoken form. Then, in a strangely obscurantist mood, he had attacked Bishop Colenso for postponing edification

to truth. Yet his last great poem, *Obermann Once More,* published in 1867, and presumably addressed to a popular audience, treats Christianity as an outworn illusion. The triumph of Dissent in 1868 irritated his refined susceptibilities; but this was chiefly because he looked on Dissenters as more illiberal and hardened dogmatists than Catholic Churchmen, whether Anglican or Roman. Religion was the best thing in the world; but, according to Arnold, it stood for enthusiastic morality. His work on *St. Paul and Protestantism* (1870) has for its object to show that this was, in effect, what the great Apostle of the Gentiles meant, or, at any rate, that his essential teaching might be preserved without accepting the specific doctrines of orthodox Christianity, or even the doctrines of a personal God and a future life.

Although Arnold had begun as a rather supercilious critic of Dissent, he soon found himself practically fighting on the side of Dissent against the advocates of denominational religious teaching in the Board schools. His next work, *Literature and Dogma* (1873), is an impassioned plea for making the Bible the basis of moral instruction, but a Bible interpreted on principles like those already applied to St. Paul's Epistles—in other words, a Bible totally divested of supernaturalist implications. The objects of his ridicule are not now to be found among members of the Liberation Society, but on the Episcopal Bench; while his most eager readers are to be sought in the Secularist or Agnostic ranks. Finally, his apologetic treatise, *God and the Bible* (1875), is much more successful as a popular version of extreme

rationalistic views than as an attempt to associate new meanings with old beliefs.

Apart from their intrinsic literary merit, which is high, these works of Arnold's deserve to be studied as evidence of the new freedom granted to those who took the unpopular side in religious discussions. Dr. Lushington's decision that a clergyman might lawfully subject any part of the Bible to adverse criticism seems to have released not only the clergy, but the laity also, from those bonds which had hitherto operated in restraint of plain speaking about religion among a people who habitually talked of themselves as the freest in the world. Opinions of a more advanced kind had, indeed, been openly professed for the last twenty years by Holyoake, Bradlaugh, and others, on the platform and in the Press. But these men formed almost a separate world, with publishers and a public of their own, any attempt on their part to associate themselves with the general interests of the people being resented almost as an outrage by the respectables. Indeed, it told heavily against Mill at the Westminster election of 1868 that he had subscribed to the election expenses of Bradlaugh, at that time already a candidate for Northampton. It was a new thing that opinions indistinguishable on the negative side from Bradlaugh's should not only be professed by one of the foremost literary men of the age, but also that they should be first published as articles in the *Cornhill Magazine* and the *Contemporary Review*.

Matthew Arnold passed for being a candid friend of the Churches, and no doubt his mind was so constituted as to feel itself more in sympathy with

their most believing members than with their uncompromising assailants. But there was not room on the needle's point for more than one such graceful performer. Mr. Swinburne, the great rising poet of the day, after devoting some of the loveliest of his *Poems and Ballads* (1866) to the glorification of Greek Paganism at the expense of Christianity, now proceeded, in a volume of revolutionary hymns entitled *Songs Before Sunrise* (1871), to denounce the idea of God with hardly less vehemence than the French Emperor or the Catholic Church. James Thomson, the strong, sombre poet of English pessimism, in his *City of Dreadful Night,* first published in Bradlaugh's *National Reformer* (1874), proclaims as "good tidings of great joy" that there is no God, and that "this little life is all we must endure." Robert Browning, a theistic optimist, who had formerly looked to Christianity for a definite guarantee of immortality, now let it be known that he rejected revelation, contenting himself with the natural religion of Voltaire, Rousseau, Gibbon, and Byron.[1]

Another very distinct indication of the rising current is to be found in Edward Fitzgerald's *Rubaiyát of Omar Khayyám.* Although this poem first appeared in 1859, its great popularity among the cultivated classes dates only from the early

[1] I have put together all the evidence furnished by Browning's poems respecting his attitude towards supernatural religion in my *History of English Rationalism,* vol. ii., pp. 275–83. As the force of my citations has been questioned, I may here refer also to the poet's own categorical statement made in conversation with Robert Buchanan that he was not a Christian (*The Outcast,* p. 198), and to his friend Mrs. Sutherland Orr's equally categorical statement that Browning's faith did not extend to a belief in revealed religion (*Contemporary Review,* vol. lx., p. 880).

'seventies, when the spirit of the age had come into closer sympathy with the hostility to theological teaching expressed in its quatrains, and most of all in those quatrains where the translator's altering and interpolating hand is most clearly visible.

Prose fiction also, where it touches the horizons of life, now indicates a distinct change of outlook as compared with the early Victorian period. Not to mention the novelists who, like Charlotte Yonge, wrote with an avowedly dogmatic purpose, there is a distinct pietistic vein running through the stories of Bulwer Lytton, Dickens, Thackeray, Charlotte Brontë, Charles Reade, and Anthony Trollope. Somewhat later George Eliot, without being herself a believer, adopts a highly sympathetic attitude towards religion. It is therefore somewhat remarkable that, on returning to prose fiction, after a silence prolonged through the reforming era (1866–71), she should exhibit in *Middlemarch,* her most elaborate and splendid performance, a much warmer sympathy with science than with religion. In the novels of her successor, Mr. Thomas Hardy, whose literary career begins at this same time, the repudiation of any interest outside humanity has always been more conclusive, and latterly has been more outspoken. And the same may be said of Mr. George Meredith, whose fame first spread beyond a narrow circle of admirers in the early 'seventies.

Darwin, in his *Origin of Species,* had not expressly gone into the question of man's derivation; and, although there could be no serious doubt about the inclusion of our race under the general

law of evolution by natural selection, it remained open to those who dreaded the great discoverer's authority to contend that he had left the matter undecided. By publishing *The Descent of Man* in 1871, the master closed that door of escape, and definitely placed himself by the side of his German disciple Haeckel. Nor were the English Darwinians at any pains to conceal what they regarded as the inconsistency of the new theory with the old beliefs. While carefully repudiating philosophical materialism, they taught something no less hostile to the idea that the world had been created, or was governed, by a superhuman intelligence and will. In his Presidential Address to the British Association (1874) Professor Tyndall, speaking for the physicists, announces that "we claim and we shall wrest from theology the entire domain of cosmological theory." He "discerns in matter the promise and potency of all terrestrial life." At the same meeting Huxley explained that our so-called voluntary movements are simply processes in the mechanism of the nervous system, connected by an unbroken continuity with the great series of causes and effects composing the sum of existence.

Such a conclusion was already implicit in the law of universal causation which Mill, thirty years earlier, had made the very foundation of inductive logic. But Mill failed to grasp the implications of his own philosophy. Dying at Avignon in 1873, he left behind him three unpublished Essays on Religion, which appeared in the following year. One of these deals with theism. All the usual arguments of natural theology for the existence of a God are passed in review and rejected, with the

single exception of the argument from design, and that only retains a provisional value, subject to the verdict of science on the soundness of Darwin's evolutionary theory. Supposing the origin of species by natural selection, or any other natural law, to be confirmed, theism would be lost. In the absence of such confirmation, the argument from design is allowed to possess a certain value, but only to the extent of creating a presumption that organised beings are the work of an intelligent Being whose power is limited by external conditions. Mill seems to have known very little about the facts of organic evolution, and to have forgotten Hume's destructive criticism of teleology as a basis for theism. A young Darwinian biologist, G. J. Romanes, who had gone very thoroughly into the subject before Mill's book appeared, exposed the fallacy of the great logician in a most convincing way ; and, although himself reconverted to theism at a later period, he seems to have derived his faith from emotional rather than from scientific considerations.

Meanwhile another representative of the new generation who, had he lived, would probably have taken the highest place among England's scientific thinkers, Professor W. K. Clifford, pointed out, in a celebrated lecture on *Body and Mind* (1874), that the intimate connection between mental function and nervous structure suggests a necessary dependence of consciousness on certain material combinations. And a brain of such dimensions as to support the mind of God is not found to exist. Clifford himself was not a materialist, but an idealist; that is to say, he looked on

material phenomena as merely the way in which the minds that form the ultimate elements of existence impress themselves on one another. What distinguished him from the theologians was that, instead of starting with an infinite intelligence and will, he assumes, to begin with, an enormous number of monads, each possessing an infinitesimal share of sensibility and volition, out of which animal and human minds have been built up by a slow process of compounding and recompounding, the resulting units being broken up at death and never afterwards reconstituted.

While theologians were kept on the alert by attacks proceeding from men of the highest scientific reputation on the very foundation of their beliefs, their historical pretensions were challenged by a massive work on *Supernatural Religion* (1874), having for its object to show that the miraculous narratives of the New Testament are so late, so ill-attested, and so self-contradictory as not to merit belief. It was written by a retired Indian official, the late Mr. Walter Cassels, who, however, did not acknowledge himself as the author until many years later. Appearing without any adventitious authority, the book nevertheless at once riveted public attention, and, in spite of its high price, passed through several editions in a few years, successfully braving an elaborate attack from Dr. Lightfoot, the most learned of Anglican divines. As is usual in such literature, the method followed by the orthodox apologist was to fasten exclusively on minor slips and side issues, overlooking the main stress of the rationalist argument.

Criticism of a more ephemeral character, but distinguished in many instances by intellectual merits of a high order, abounded in the lighter literature of the period. Such an onslaught on the popular theology, so ably conducted and marked by such passionate hostility, had never been known before among the higher classes of English society, and has not since been repeated. We have to seek for the explanation of so remarkable a phenomenon in the circumstances of the time. To begin with, the leaders of religious opinion were themselves largely responsible for the quarrel. They had attacked the new scientific theory of evolution and its representatives, as they had formerly attacked the truths of geology, with ignorant misrepresentation and venomous persistence. Even well on in the 'seventies we have it on contemporary evidence that "the rank and file of the Anglican clergy were intensely obscurantist," and that the pulpits rang with declamations against modern science.[1]

Science was perhaps big enough to take care of herself; but her votaries wished knowledge to be diffused as well as increased—more especially as diffusion would make for further increase. They were all for popular education; and here the clergy offered a much more formidable resistance than that opposed to their views about man's place in nature. While still himself a clergyman, J. R. Green, the celebrated historian of the English people, declared that "the clergy knew that a thoroughly educated people, and that people without any uneducated class, would be the ruin of

[1] John Morley, *Struggle for National Education,* p. 61; *On Compromise,* p. 53.

their Establishment. And so they fight every point, but with them it is a fight for life." These words were written before the passing of the Education Act. Clerical influence made the new system far less efficient than it ought to have been by associating it with an increased endowment of denominational teaching. Meanwhile—so at least Green thought—"every day made it more impossible to conciliate the Church of Dogma with the Church of Science." He welcomes the Liberal defeat at the General Election of 1874 as likely to hasten on Disestablishment. State support to a Ritualist Church means "paying money to make England papist."[1]

Pari passu with the new sacerdotal movement, the Romanism which Green and many others looked on as its inevitable terminus was every year assuming a more ominous aspect. We have seen to what dangerous principles the acceptance of Papal infallibility was expected to pledge every consistent Catholic believer. And quite apart from doctrinal implications, the Papacy as a political institution did not commend itself to English Liberalism. Pius IX. actively and openly opposed the unification of Italy. He was universally believed to be counter-working the establishment of a Republic in France. And the formation of a powerful Catholic Opposition in the new German Parliament convinced such good judges as the founders of German unity that the Pope was its deadly enemy. Now, all three causes were supported by the Liberal party in England, to which

[1] *Letters of J. R. Green,* pp. 171–72, 292, 378.

English rationalists, almost without exception, belonged, so that every motive of interest and sympathy impelled them to make war on a system which could be most effectually destroyed by showing that its fundamental assumptions were untrue.

Disraeli had no sympathy with science, and rationalism he thoroughly detested. But, both as a Jew and a Tory, he also hated the Roman Church; and his most entertaining, if not his most brilliant novel, *Lothair* (1870), is directed against Rome's supposed machinations for alluring rich young men into her fold. As Prime Minister, a cardinal principle of his policy was, apparently, to avoid what he considered the mistakes of his predecessor. Now, the overthrow of the Irish Church was, in his opinion, the removal of an important bulwark against Rome. To check Romanising practices within the Anglican Church would have the contrary effect. Probably for this reason Disraeli, though personally not approving of it, gave his support and sympathy to one of the earliest measures of his Administration, the Public Worship Regulation Bill, describing it as a Bill "to put down Ritualism"—a phrase which sent back a large body of High Church support to his rival Gladstone.[1]

More success attended the Tory Government in such of their measures as were designed for the benefit of the working classes; but it must not be forgotten that these were the direct fruit of the

[1] T. E. Kebbel, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. xv., p. 112.

extended suffrage Toryism had so long resisted. As it was, the Trade Unions had some difficulty in holding the Tories to their electioneering pledges. A Commission appointed to consider their grievances only led to "a perfunctory investigation and an inconclusive report." Then, as the result of increased agitation, "the Home Secretary introduced a Bill for altering respectively the civil and criminal law. As amended in Committee by the efforts of A. J. Mundella and others, these measures resulted in Acts which completely satisfied the Trade Union demands. The Criminal Law Amendment Act was repealed." By another Act "definite and reasonable limits were set to the application of the law of conspiracy to trade disputes." A third Act transformed the relation between capitalist and labourer from that between master and servant to that of employer and employee, making them "two equal parties to a civil contract." "Imprisonment for breach of contract was abolished, peaceful picketing permitted, violence and intimidation dealt with as part of the general criminal Code."[1]

To Mundella, the Radical member for Sheffield, also belongs the credit of a new Factory Act, still further reducing the hours of labour for women and children, and indirectly for men, passed in 1874 by the Conservative Home Secretary. This, together with the Factories and Workshops Act of 1878—a measure for consolidating and simplifying the whole mass of legislation on the subject—has given occasion to the unwarrantable boast that the Conservatives are the best friends of the working man.

[1] Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, pp. 274–75.

What this friendship really amounts to was shown by a remarkable incident in the Session of 1875, which also illustrates a discreditable habit observed among English politicians of yielding to violence what they will not yield to justice. Samuel Plimsoll, a Nonconformist philanthropist who first entered Parliament in 1868, and was re-elected in 1874, had for some years been devoting himself to schemes for protecting the sailors employed on board merchant ships against the murderous greed of the shipowners. He discovered that it was a common practice to send out unseaworthy vessels insured beyond the value of their cargo with a view to making a profitable speculation in the highly probable event of their going down with all hands on board. According to Plimsoll, rotten old craft were bought up by regular "ship-knackers" for this nefarious purpose. Aided in his campaign by large contributions from the Trade Unions, he introduced more than one Bill for the protection of the unfortunate sailors by a system of official inspection. On his failing to pass a measure for the purpose, popular agitation compelled the Conservative Government to take it up in 1875; but towards the close of the Session they withdrew their Bill. Plimsoll thereupon made a violent scene in the House, shaking his fist in the face of the Ministers, and calling the shipowning members, to whose hostility he attributed the defeat of his efforts, "you villains." Disraeli, with great tact and good temper, let down the exasperated enthusiast as gently as in the circumstances was possible. A temporary Act was at once passed, and something in the way of permanent legislation

was effected the year after, but only, as would seem, with the result that "the evils both of overloading and of unseaworthiness were aggravated by this well-meant attempt to check them."[1] It does not appear that the method of making owners penally responsible for the loss of life, if any, due to their calculated negligence has been tried.

To restore Army purchase outright was beyond the power of the Tory Government. But they brought back the principle in an underhand way by a Bill enabling poor officers who exchanged into regiments ordered to India to accept a sum of money from those whose places they took, and who were willing to hire substitutes—for that was what the arrangement really meant—that they might be relieved from the obligation of serving their country in that disagreeable manner.

Among the provisions of Forster's Education Act which gave offence to Nonconformists the Twenty-fifth Section, although not the most important, was the one particularly singled out for attack. It "enabled School Boards to pay the school-pence of the children of the indigent parents at whatever school, denominational or otherwise, the indigent parent might select."[2] In 1876 the obnoxious clause was repealed; but, as the new Act merely transferred the payment of school-pence from the School Board to the Guardians, the grievance of those who objected to being taxed for a religious education of which they did not approve remained the same, and was even aggravated

[1] *Social England*, vol. vi., p. 615.
[2] Morley, *Struggle for National Education*, p. 8.

by an increase of the Government subsidy to the denominational schools, amounting in most instances to an additional half-crown per child.[1] As a set-off against this reactionary policy, the Act of 1876 took a long step towards creating adequate machinery for obliging parents to provide for the education of their children.[2]

Perhaps the most beneficent work of the Conservative Government was the institution by their Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Stafford Northcote, of a Sinking Fund. In the Budget of 1875 a fixed charge of twenty-eight millions was assigned to the service of the National Debt. What remained of this sum after paying the interest was to be spent on the redemption of debt, and, as under the arrangement contemplated less would be paid as interest every year, the amount available for paying off capital would be increased to the same extent. Two conditions, however, were involved in the perfect working of the scheme. The first is that no new debt should be contracted, the second that the Sinking Fund should be kept inviolate; and neither of these has been invariably observed. Still, the actual effect of Northcote's scheme has been to reduce our liabilities considerably below the level at which they would otherwise have stood, placing us, so far, in a more hopeful position than is occupied in this respect by any other great European Power. And for this, as I have already noticed, we have to thank no practical statesman, Liberal or Conservative, but the far-sighted philosopher John Stuart Mill.

[1] Holman, *English National Education*, pp. 202–3.
[2] *Ibid*, pp. 201–2.

Chapter XVI.

THE EMPRESS OF INDIA'S GRAND VIZIER

Disraeli, on taking office for the last time, announced that his programme would be *sanitas sanitatum, omnia sanitas*. Years afterwards Robert Lowe suggested that the original saying of Ecclesiastes would have better described his performance. In fact, the sanitary measures of the Conservative Administration were limited to the Artisans' Dwellings Act of 1875, the Alkali Act of 1874, and the Pollution of Rivers Act of 1876. Of these the first proposed to pull down what are called rookeries, and to replace them by healthier habitations. But the owners of the rookeries were to be compensated on such a liberal scale as to make the cost of demolishing them prohibitive. The other two Acts, good as far as they went, seem to have been somewhat restricted in their operation.[1] "The Commons Act for preventing illegal inclosures and securing open spaces for the people" may also be mentioned in this connection for what it is worth.[2]

Such squalid interests, however, could at no time have engrossed much of the Hebrew Premier's florid imagination. To exhibit England

[1] *Social England*, vol. vi., p. 616.
[2] Kebbel, *History of Toryism*, p. 369.

as an Asiatic Power by sending the Prince of Wales on a tour through India, and by having Queen Victoria proclaimed Empress of India (much to the disgust of her English subjects), were triumphs better suited to his Oriental temperament. But these also were vanities compared with what the statesmanship of Chatham and Palmerston had achieved. It was really Palmerston's brilliant Eastern diplomacy that had inspired the dreams of *Tancred,* as Palmerston's anti-Russian policy was next to inspire the waking schemes of *Tancred's* author. For Disraeli, who had so bitterly taunted Peel with appropriating other people's ideas, was himself as a practical politician much less original than Peel, and much less felicitous also in his choice of models. An opportunity soon presented itself for showing how little his wonderful histrionic powers qualified him for dealing with the realities of European history, how unsafe it was to copy Palmerston when the conditions under which Palmerston acted were no longer there.

Carlyle, writing in 1870, referred to the Turk of Charles V.'s time as "a quasi-infernal roaring lion in the height of his sanguinary fury and fanaticism, not sunk to *caput mortuum* and a torpid nuisance as now."[1] Yet what happened in Syria ten years before showed that the Turk could revert without warning to his former character. In the summer of 1860 the Maronites, a Christian tribe inhabiting Mount Lebanon, were treacherously attacked and

[1] Carlyle, *Miscellaneous Essays,* vol. vii., p. 243 (People's edition).

massacred by their old enemies the Druses, with the connivance and assistance of the Turkish officials and the Turkish garrison. One hundred and fifty villages were burned, six thousand Christians murdered, two thousand women sold into slavery. By orders from Constantinople the perpetrators of these horrors were allowed to get off with almost complete impunity.[1]

In 1863 Professor Goldwin Smith addressed a letter to the *Daily News* clearly setting forth the position of the Turks as a barbarous horde encamped on European soil, incapable of founding any permanent civilisation in the regions over which they held sway. A new Turkish loan was launched on the London market that year, and it would have been well for English investors had they laid to heart the prophetic warning of the philosophic historian.

Thanks to the blind greed of Western capitalism, the barbarian horde held its own for yet a while. In 1866 the Cretan Greeks rose against the Turks, and the insurrection was hailed by Mr. Swinburne in an ode half of triumph at the revival of liberty, half of sorrow at the supineness of Europe. But the Powers refused to interfere, and Lord Stanley, the English Foreign Secretary, gave orders that Greek fugitives were not to receive shelter on board English men-of-war.

At last the breaking-point was reached. The rising of the Bosnian Christians against their Mohammedan oppressors in 1875 so strained the

[1] De la Gorce, *Histoire du Second Empire,* vol. iii., pp. 314–44. My authority for the numbers given is Lavallée, *Histoire des Français,* continuée par Frédéric Lock, vol. vi., p. 174.

resources of the Turkish Government that after twenty years of ruinous extravagance, fed by the loans of credulous investors, it became bankrupt, reducing the interest on its five per cent. debt to one half, and soon failing to pay even that diminished amount.

Meanwhile Turkey's chief vassal, Ismail, the Khedive of Egypt, who had been running a similar career of extravagance, found himself in almost as desperate straits. His unfortunate serfs had been squeezed to the last piastre by a process of extortion unprecedented even in a record going back through at least five thousand years of monotonous oppression. Foreign capital, alarmed by the catastrophe at Constantinople, declined to take any further risk. One resource, however, still remained available. A great French engineer, overcoming the physical obstacles presented by the Isthmus of Suez, and the still more formidable resistance of Lord Palmerston, had at last succeeded in connecting the Mediterranean with the Red Sea by a ship canal. As the price of his assistance a number of shares in the enterprise were allotted to Ismail. It was understood that these must be sold to cover his immediate liabilities, and the French Government was spoken of as a likely purchaser. At this juncture Mr. Frederick Greenwood, editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette,* and at that time beyond dispute the ablest journalist in London, sought an audience of the Prime Minister, and appealed to him not to let the opportunity escape. Perhaps the idea of turning what Palmerston had thought a menace into a bulwark of England's power stirred Disraeli's imagination. At any rate, he agreed to pay four

million sterling for the shares. In the Cabinet this step was opposed by the two Ministers whose departments it most interested—Lord Stanley, the Foreign Secretary, and Sir Stafford Northcote, the Chancellor of the Exchequer; in the House of Commons the Liberal leaders unanimously condemned it. But the *Times* supported Disraeli, and the vocal section of public opinion acquiesced. Abroad people regarded buying the shares as equivalent to buying the Canal, and buying the Canal as equivalent to an English Protectorate over Egypt. As things then stood, the immediate military occupation of the Nile valley by English troops would probably not have called forth any effective protest, and would have prevented much bloodshed in the years to come. But the cohesion of a Cabinet unenterprising by the very law of its existence would not have resisted this further strain.

What made the insurrection in Bosnia and Herzegovina so dangerous to Turkey was that the scene of action lay just outside the door of a great Christian Power. Austria could not view with indifference a contest raging on her frontier and throwing crowds of refugees on her charity for support. Andrassy, the Austrian Chancellor, drew up a Note, to which all the great Powers adhered, pressing certain administrative reforms on the Porte. The Porte accepted them; but the insurgents, knowing what Turkish promises were worth, fought on. Then Carlyle's quasi-infernal roaring lion woke up. "On May 6th, 1876, the Prussian and French Consuls at Salonica were

attacked and murdered by the mob."[1] The Chancellors of the three Empires drew up a Memorandum threatening forcible intervention unless immediate steps were taken to put the promised reforms into execution. Of the other three Powers England alone refused her adhesion to the Memorandum. Immediately after this the Sultan Abdul Aziz was deposed and murdered in prison. His successor Murad, after a three months' reign, was also deposed and replaced by the present Sultan, Abdul Hamid, a ruler in whom the anti-human instincts of his race have embodied themselves with ideal perfection, unrelieved by any trace of the Ottoman's dauntless physical courage.

During that summer events came to light which opened the eyes of at least some Englishmen to the real character of the Power with whose doings their Government declined to interfere. In April the insurrectionary movement had spread from Herzegovina to Bulgaria. Here the Turks had a freer hand, and they applied their traditional methods of repression on a more comprehensive scale. Two correspondents of the *Daily News* first made known to Western Europe the story, since often repeated, of massacre and torture inflicted by Turkish irregular troops on Christian men, women, and children. There may have been some exaggeration about the first accounts. There generally is exaggeration on these occasions. The Sepoy mutineers did not commit all, or nearly all, the horrors ascribed to them by English journalists at the time. But we do not therefore reject as mythical the

[1] Fyffe, *History of Modern Europe*, vol. iii., p. 479.

narratives, written from ocular testimony, of what happened at Delhi and Cawnpore. And in this instance we have the official report of an English Secretary of Legation sent from Constantinople to collect evidence on the spot. It estimates the number of slaughtered Bulgarians at 12,000. At Batak "the villagers were summoned by Achmet Aga to give up their arms, and were solemnly assured by him that, if they did so, their lives would be spared. They obeyed, and gave him their money, too. Achmet promptly set the Bashi-Bazouks upon them, who slaughtered them like sheep. Twelve hundred who took refuge in a church were burnt alive. For this exploit Achmet received the order of the Medjidie."[1]

Disraeli, when first questioned about the massacres, spoke of the newspaper reports as "coffee-house babble." That babble was soon to be used as the instrument of his overthrow. Early in September Gladstone, accepting the correspondence of the *Daily News* as, on the whole, trustworthy, published a pamphlet entitled *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East,* in which he demanded the expulsion of the Turkish executive officers "from the province they had desolated and profaned." Disraeli, who had been recently raised to the peerage under the title of Earl of Beaconsfield, replied by a protest against the politicians who made use of such incidents for party purposes, "comparing them unfavourably with the perpetrators of the Bulgarian massacres."[2]

[1] H. Paul, *Modern England,* vol. iv., p. 12.
[2] *Ibid,* p. 13.

Apparently, his idea was that our Indian Empire would not be safe unless the Turks continued to keep Russia out of Constantinople, and that a statesman who urged his countrymen to abandon Turkey was for that reason a traitor to England. It was possible to retort, as Freeman the historian actually did, that an empire which could be preserved only at the cost of condoning Turkish atrocities had better be abandoned. Lord Beaconsfield's admirers were evidently not prepared openly to repudiate the idea of applying morality to politics, for, whereas Freeman had said, "Perish our empire in India rather than justice," they studiously quoted him as having said, "Perish India!" and their misrepresentation had such success that Queen Victoria waited some weeks to confirm his appointment to the Professorship of Modern History at Oxford until she was able to satisfy herself about the truth of this report.

In point of fact, the preservation of our empire involved no such disgraceful complicity with the crimes of Achmet Aga. It is very doubtful whether, in any case, our communications with the Far East would be endangered by the presence of a Russian army at Constantinople. With the Suez Canal in our possession, the danger becomes exceedingly small. Nor was there at that time any serious question of a Russian advance to the Bosporus. Austria, whose interests were more concerned than ours to prevent it, would have blocked the way. Russia herself did not wish for war; nor, if Gladstone's demand of autonomy for Bulgaria had been conceded, would there have been any war. To secure this end no more was needed

than a peremptory representation from England. As it was, the Turks resisted because England made no such demand, and because, when Russia made it, they felt sure that their old ally would not leave them in the lurch.

For a moment it seemed as if the Christians of the Balkan Peninsula could recover their freedom unaided. Aspiring to play the part of a new Piedmont, Servia declared herself independent, and joined with Montenegro, which had always been independent, in making war on the Porte, thousands of Russian volunteers flocking to take part in the new crusade. Unfortunately the Servians were neither themselves a fighting race, nor were they led by a brave Prince; while the Turks, besides wielding far greater resources, showed that their old military capacity still survived in unbroken vigour. Montenegro did wonders; but a series of disasters laid Servia at the feet of her old conquerors before the summer of 1876 was over, to be saved only by Russia's imperative intercession.

Then followed six months of negotiation between the Porte and a reconstituted European Concert. The Powers were agreed in demanding a reformed administration for the Christian provinces of the Balkan Peninsula, with an armed executive Commission to enforce their decrees. All might have been peaceably arranged had not Beaconsfield, with his usual genius for plagiarism, set himself to repeat the part played by Palmerston in 1853–54, totally misconceiving the difference of circumstances, the aim, and the spirit that distinguished his model

from himself. Palmerston had struck at Russia as the enemy of European liberty no less than as the rival of England; Turkey had at least protected Kossuth; with the help of English capital she might be started on a new career of peaceful progress and unsectarian enlightenment; the English people were burning to avenge the wrongs of Hungary; best of all, Louis Napoleon was ready to sell the co-operation of his army and fleet for the cheap price of an introduction to good society. In 1876 not only had all this changed, but, as if to heighten the force of contrast, the political situation of 1859 naturally recurred to the memory of thoughtful people as an exact parallel and precedent for England's guidance in this new crisis of her fate. Then, also, Conservative alarmists had ridiculed the pretensions of a despot to come forward as the champion of a struggling nationality; they had recalled the policy of selfish aggrandisement invariably pursued by French conquerors beyond the Alps; they had recommended us to stand by Austria as the defender of European treaties and the old ally of England. Yet their predictions had all been falsified, and their preferences had contributed to Disraeli's own defeat in the General Election that took place during the Franco-Austrian War. That the cause of the Balkan populations had succeeded to the cause of Italy in the sympathies of English Liberalism had been made abundantly clear by a message of encouragement from the veteran Whig Lord Russell to the Herzegovinian insurgents, and by the enormous success of Gladstone's pamphlet on Bulgarian horrors, which was selling at the rate

of 10,000 copies a day. But, as we have seen, it was a guiding principle with the Tory chief to avoid what seemed to be the ruinous mistakes of his rival, and among those mistakes the most ruinous, in his opinion, was an insufficient assertion of England's power. He forgot that, since Elizabeth, England has only intervened with success and satisfaction to herself on the side of nations struggling to be free.

In a speech delivered at the Guildhall on November 9th, 1876, Beaconsfield declared that England was ready to fight three campaigns in a righteous cause—meaning, presumably, the cause of Abdul Hamid and Achmet Aga. After such a defiance the Czar could not draw back; after such an encouragement the Turk would not yield. A Conference held at Constantinople to press the demands of united Europe on the Porte failed to impress the wily barbarians, who knew, thanks to the English Premier's speech, what to think of its unity. On April 24th, 1877, Russia began what the *Spectator* described, with truth, as "the most just and necessary war of our time."

England had not the glory of making that war unnecessary by sending her fleet to bring the Sultan to reason. She narrowly escaped the infamy of aggravating it by sending her fleet to his support. "There is reason to believe that preparations were actually made, that commanders were chosen, and instructions were almost on their way, which would have committed the country beyond recall. Carlyle heard of this, not, as he said, from idle rumour, but from some authentic source," with the happy result that he wrote a short

letter to the *Times* denouncing, in veiled but significant terms, the scheme of "our miraculous Premier" to the world. What the Premier was actually planning has not yet transpired; but the fleet did not sail, and "this, perhaps," observes his biographer, "was the most useful act in Carlyle's whole life."[1]

Be her cause just or unjust, Russia's generals conduct the operations of war with the same invariable stupidity. On this occasion, as before in the Crimea and afterwards on a far greater scale in Manchuria, her armies suffered a series of discreditable defeats; and the same section of English society that had applauded Louis Napoleon, the Southern slave-holders, and Governor Eyre, now found fresh cause for congratulation in the performances of the victorious Pashas. At last a competent strategist, Todleben, the defender of Sebastopol, was placed in virtual command of the Czar's invading armies, and the Turkish defence collapsed at every point. On advancing to within striking distance of Constantinople the conquerors found themselves confronted by an English fleet. Again war seemed imminent, and again prudent counsels prevailed. Without entering the enemy's capital, Russia was in a position to dictate terms of peace. Her demands were, in the circumstances, not excessive. Originally undertaken for the deliverance of Bulgaria, the war was to have for its chief result the constitution of an autonomous Bulgarian Principality, with a population of four millions and a territory somewhat less

[1] Froude, *Life of Carlyle,* vol. iv., pp. 441–42.

than Roumania and Servia put together. Any increase in the number of people released from Turkish administration represented a pure gain to humanity; and the larger the country they occupied, the better chance would they have of maintaining their independence against Russia.

Such, however, was not the opinion of the English Ministry, who looked on the proposed principality as Russia's predestined ally in any future advance on Constantinople, just as Roumania had been her ally in the recent campaign. Their protest took the form of a demand that the Treaty of San Stefano, as it was called, should be subjected to the revision of a European Congress. Russia, who had performed single-handed the office Europe had declined, naturally objected to having her work pulled to pieces by those who looked on while she fought. For the third time war came in sight—on this occasion, however, with the likelihood that Austria would be our ally. Two Ministers, Derby and Carnarvon, representing the peace party in the Cabinet, resigned; a credit of six millions was voted, the Reserves were called out, and 7,000 Sepoys were brought from India to Malta—a trumpery reinforcement, of whose ability to face European troops some authorities expressed their doubts.

On June 3rd, 1878, the new Foreign Secretary, Lord Salisbury, announced that Russia—alarmed, as was left to be supposed, by our more or less imposing display of power—had consented to lay the Treaty of San Stefano before a European Congress. Unfortunately, the day after the Congress met at Berlin it transpired that the

labours of that august assembly had been forestalled by a private arrangement made between Lord Salisbury himself and Count Schouvaloff, the Russian Ambassador in London. An outsider employed by the Foreign Office to copy the secret treaty had made a private copy for himself, and had sold it to the *Globe* newspaper, which published the text *in extenso* on the evening of June 14th.

England alone had made the subjection of the Treaty of San Stefano to a European Congress a question of peace or war. It now appeared that she was ready to back up every demand of Russia except one. Instead of a big Bulgaria, there was to be a little one, with a territory two-fifths of the size originally determined, and a population reduced from four to one and a-half millions. Another fifth, with a population of nearly a million, was to be formed into a province called Eastern Roumelia, to be placed more directly under Turkish sovereignty, but with guarantees against its worst abuses. The remaining two-fifths reverted to the chances of alternate oppression and anarchy. As a fee for her good offices England was to occupy Cyprus, paying tribute for it to the Porte.

Beaconsfield and Salisbury represented England in the rather farcical gathering of diplomatists who met at Berlin to register the articles of the secret treaty. Such was the dread and hatred of Russia entertained at that time by the German people, and such the influence of Hebrew journalists on public opinion, that the not very great concessions extorted from Prince Gortchakoff by Beaconsfield made our Prime Minister the idol of all classes in Germany, even

the historian Mommsen ranking him with Pitt.[1] Received on his return to London by a cheering multitude, the great master of hollow phraseology favoured them with his most felicitous creation: "We bring you back peace with honour." Peace had not been endangered by anyone but himself; and the honour was rather for his personality than for his adopted country.

Palmerston's first challenge to Russia in Europe had been met by a counter-mine at Cabul, exploding in disastrous war. His imitator was now to experience the consequences of the same policy in much the same way.

In January, 1876, Disraeli sent out Lord Lytton, son of Bulwer-Lytton, the novelist and statesman, as Viceroy to India. With the temperament but without the genius of a poet, the new ruler had hitherto been known, or rather notorious, for the extent and audacity of his literary plagiarisms. As a practical statesman he habitually set himself above precedent and advice, sometimes with good, sometimes with evil consequences. Because the liberty of the Press has been defended on grounds of abstract right, he failed to see that it may be defended with better reason on grounds of practical expediency, summarily disposing of it as "a fetish" —a nickname which his party are now using as an excellent substitute for argument in their campaign against Free Trade. His own fetish was State interference. But the methods of benevolent despotism are better fitted to cope with famine

[1] Mommsen, *Römische Geschichte*, Bd. v., p. 264.

than with discontent; and if Lord Lytton gagged the Hindoo Press, he fed the Hindoo people. Beyond the Indian frontier his policy of not letting things alone proved fruitful of mischief. His tactless efforts to bring Shere Ali, the Ameer of Afghanistan, permanently within the sphere of British influence, merely drove that half-insane potentate to seek protection from the ever-advancing power of Russia. An opportunity soon occurred for making himself agreeable to his Northern neighbour, with the advantage, at the same time, of reading a lesson to the meddlesome Viceroy. Beaconsfield's threat to draw on India for reinforcements naturally suggested to the Czar's advisers a scheme for giving the Indian Army employment nearer home. While the issues of peace and war were still pending in the West, a Russian envoy left for Cabul—probably to negotiate an alliance with Afghanistan. He arrived after the Congress had done its work, and withdrew after a short visit, his continued stay not being thought desirable by the suspicious Afghans. Lytton had previously broken off all relations with Shere Ali; but it seemed intolerable that a Russian envoy should be received where admission had been denied to the representatives of the Empress of India. Accordingly, without the Ameer's consent and against his known wishes, a British Mission, accompanied by an escort of 200 armed men, was dispatched to Cabul, but was stopped immediately after crossing the frontier by an Afghan official, and forbidden to advance any further until instructions had been received from the Ameer. The Afghans, as an independent people, were clearly within their rights

in acting as they did ; but the Indian Government, like the French Government in 1870, wanted to pick a quarrel for the purpose of securing what was called a scientific frontier by annexing a piece of Afghan territory. The pretended insult to our Embassy furnished a welcome pretext for an iniquitous war of conquest.

Shere Ali fled before the invaders, and died soon afterwards in exile. His son, Yacoub, accepted a treaty ceding the scientific frontier, and agreeing to the establishment of a British Resident at Cabul. Sir Louis Cavagnari, the officer chosen to occupy that perilous position, entered on his duties on July 24th, 1878. Six weeks afterwards he and the whole Mission were massacred by the Afghans, with the connivance, as is believed, of Yacoub. This catastrophe necessitated a second war, leading to the temporary dismemberment of the country, the southern division, Candahar, being retained in our possession. Still the tribesmen fought on, and even inflicted on us at Maiwand (July 27th, 1880) the most signal defeat ever suffered by a British army at the hands of Asiatics. Our military position was retrieved by the brilliant strategy of General Roberts, whose decisive victory at Candahar brought the war to an end. By this time a Liberal Ministry had succeeded to office ; the just demands of the Afghans were conceded ; Candahar was reunited to Afghanistan ; and the new Ameer, Abdurrahman, entered into friendly relations with the Indian Government, which abandoned the unlucky attempt to force a British Resident on the Afghan ruler when a native envoy answered the same purpose much better. Meanwhile, India had

to pay £17,000,000 for an unjust and unnecessary war.

Among the few territorial gains assigned to England by the Congress of Vienna, the Cape of Good Hope was one. It had been taken from the Dutch at a time when their country was a vassal of the French Empire; and, being a station on the ocean route to India, it seemed too valuable a possession to part with when Holland regained her independence on the restoration of peace. But the old colonists, known as Boers, who were mostly Dutch or French, did not take kindly to British rule. After a time great numbers of them migrated across the Orange and Vaal Rivers, founding new settlements whose independence the Cape Government recognised in 1853 and 1854 under the names of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal Republic. Meanwhile the native Africans, a robust and high-spirited race, by the multiplication of their numbers effectually prevented the white colonisation of the country on such a scale as obtained in America and Australia. Their frequent revolts involved us in expensive wars, and at the same time kept alive the military spirit of the Boers.

In 1877 the Transvaal Republic had become nearly bankrupt, and was reported to be in danger of invasion by the Zulus, who, under the administration of their king, Cetywayo, had developed a formidable military power. At the suggestion of some settlers, who probably expected to make their fortunes under a more efficient government, the Transvaal was annexed by proclamation to the

British Crown without the consent, and against the wish, of the Boer population. Had our agent, Sir Theophilus Shepstone, who was personally responsible for the annexation, been content to wait a little longer, the same result might have been amicably obtained.

At that time it was a favourite scheme with English statesmen to unite the whole of South Africa into a single Confederation, somewhat after the style of the Dominion of Canada. In furtherance of this scheme Lord Carnarvon, the Conservative Colonial Secretary, sent out Sir Bartle Frere, an Anglo-Indian official of high character and ability, as Governor of Cape Colony and High Commissioner for the settlement of native affairs. Cetywayo, who had been deeply offended at seeing the Transvaal rescued from his grasp, proved a formidable obstacle in Frere's path. An ultimatum practically demanding the break-up of his army and the surrender of his independence was sent to the Zulu King. On the expiration of the time allowed for an answer, the High Commissioner declared war, without the authorisation of the Home Government and contrary to their instructions. The force at his disposal seems to have been insufficient for its destination, besides being led by one of our incompetent titled generals, Lord Chelmsford. Owing to his bad management, a force of 1,774 British soldiers and 650 natives was surprised and defeated by 20,000 Zulus, with the loss of half its numbers.

Had the policy of Sir Bartle Frere proved immediately successful, his disobedience would probably have been condoned and rewarded. When the

news of the disaster, for which he was not responsible, reached England the Beaconsfield Government censured, but did not recall him. At this distance of time we can see that their violations of justice and expediency were far more flagrant in the case of Bulgaria and Afghanistan than in the case of South Africa. Yet in both instances they received the support of many Liberal members, whereas the whole Liberal Opposition united in a vote of censure on their lenient treatment of the man who, on his own responsibility, had involved us in an unprovoked and unlucky war. Their party majority saved them from defeat; but it was understood that the Liberals had public opinion at their back.

After a six months' campaign, Lord Chelmsford succeeded in decisively defeating his barbarian opponents. Before their final overthrow they had unconsciously rendered a service to French as well as to English Liberalism. The Prince Imperial, as the fallen French Emperor's heir was entitled, had gone out to the Cape as a volunteer in order to acquire some of that military reputation which is the obligatory stock-in-trade of a Bonapartist pretender. He fell into a Zulu ambush, and, by his death, relieved France from the fear of an Imperialist restoration. His sword had not made women childless; but the sentence of the Hebrew prophet seemed to be carried out with terrible appropriateness on her who had forced on the Franco-German War that her son's succession to a tottering throne might be secured.

A period of commercial and agricultural distress

at home came to reinforce the effect of disaster and discredit abroad. In Ireland the bad harvest of 1879 led to the association of an agrarian agitation for reduced rents—or, in some instances, for no rent—with the chronic political agitation for Home Rule. In Great Britain the influence of political journalism, once so powerful, on public opinion now gave place utterly to the influence of platform oratory, not merely on the audience who heard it delivered, but on the far greater multitude who read reports of it in the daily Press. Two speakers, in particular, made an unprecedented impression—Sir William Harcourt on the educated classes, by coruscations of wit and epigram recalling Disraeli in his best days, Gladstone on the many, by an impassioned eloquence beside which Bright's more carefully studied and classic periods seemed cold and tame.

So insecure did the Conservative leaders feel their position to be that they seemed to contemplate the advisability of letting Parliament sit out the legal term of its existence. Then something that looked very like a gigantic job in connection with a Bill for buying out the London Water Companies raised an outcry before which they found it expedient to retreat by means of an appeal to the country (March, 1880).

"We always knew," said Gladstone, with unwonted pleasantry, "that water would dissolve salt, but not that it would dissolve a Parliament." In this instance it dissolved a Government and a whole political system as well. At the General Election of 1880 the Conservatives lost 112 seats. As against Liberals and Home Rulers combined, they were in

a minority of 173; as against the Liberals alone, they were in a minority of 107. If the Home Rulers—of whom there were 61—should combine with the Conservatives, the Liberals would still be in a majority of 46.

The dominant party owed its victory, not only to popular enthusiasm, but also to a new system of electoral organisation known, by the misapplication of an American political term, as the Caucus. Candidates for the Parliamentary representation of the constituencies, when they were not the nominees of a local magnate, used, in many instances, to be supplied by the London clubs or similar centralised agencies. The object of those who instituted the Caucus was to hand over this office to a permanent local association chosen by the electors themselves. Each member of the association was elected by a group of electors, constituting what is called a primary, recognised as permanently belonging to the same party, and periodically convoked to choose a representative, just like the larger body of which they formed a subsection. Where this arrangement worked normally, it operated as a healthy development of the representative system, giving the electors a sustained interest in current political questions, and bringing members of Parliament into closer political touch with the opinions and sentiments of those to whom they owed their place in the great Council of the nation.

This excellent system, which has since been adopted by the Conservatives also, was introduced by Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, the member for Birmingham, at that time leader of the advanced Radicals, a strong opponent of State-aided

denominational education, and a strong supporter of Gladstone's Eastern policy. His opinions were supposed to be largely inspired by Sir Charles Dilke and Mr. John Morley, with whom he acted in close alliance. In extent and accuracy of knowledge both were immensely Mr. Chamberlain's superiors; but neither of them could compare with him as an orator or a practical statesman. Many looked on him as Gladstone's destined successor in the leadership of the Liberal party. Meanwhile, his services as the organiser of victory were recognised on the formation of a new Ministry by the bestowal on him of Cabinet rank in the Administration formed by Gladstone when the General Election drove Beaconsfield from power.

Chapter XVII.

THE LAST PALADINS

It is remarkable that Gladstone's second Ministry included a number of statesmen who had opposed, as not being Liberal enough, his education policy of 1870 and 1873. Mr. Chamberlain, as I have said, obtained a seat in the Cabinet; and if Fawcett, Mundella, Sir Charles Dilke, and Mr. G. O. Trevelyan occupied less prominent positions, it was felt that they represented the future, and that the leanings of the Government, as a whole, would be largely determined by their opinions.

It soon appeared, however, that the religious liberality of the Ministerial majority hardly equalled the promise of the Front Bench. Among the newly-elected Radical members, one of the most remarkable was Charles Bradlaugh. We have already come across him as a leader in the Secularist movement. Being a powerful public speaker and interested in other things besides rationalistic criticism, he had contested Northampton in 1868, but was defeated by a large majority. In 1880 he had better success, polling 675 more than the higher of the two Conservative candidates, the leading local brewer.

When Parliament met, on May 3rd, Bradlaugh presented himself at the table of the House of Commons and claimed leave to be admitted on his affirmation, instead of taking the usual oath, under

an Act passed for the relief of non-theistic witnesses in courts of justice. The point was referred to a Select Committee, which decided, by the casting vote of its chairman, that the claim was invalid. Bradlaugh then expressed his readiness to take the oath, and had already presented himself for the purpose when Sir Henry Drummond Wolff protested against his being permitted to do so. Such an intervention, as afterwards appeared, was illegal, and ought not to have been sanctioned by the Speaker, who, however, was on this occasion weak enough to permit it. The Prime Minister then carried a Resolution for the appointment of a fresh Committee to consider the question of Bradlaugh's competence to be sworn. As a result of questions put to him about his religious opinions, but in express contradiction to his own declarations on the subject, the Committee decided that an oath would not bind his conscience, and for that reason refused him permission to take it. His colleague in the representation of Northampton, Mr. Labouchere, then moved that Bradlaugh should be permitted to affirm. The House refused permission by 275 to 230, thirty-six Liberals and thirty-one Home Rulers voting in the majority. In the course of the debate John Bright declared that, "to a large extent, the working people of this country do not care any more for the dogmas of Christianity than the upper classes care for the practice of that religion."[1]

Again Bradlaugh claimed to be sworn, and this time, on his refusing to withdraw, was forcibly

[1] J. M. Robertson, in the *Life of Charles Bradlaugh,* by his Daughter, vol. ii., p. 235. In my whole account of the Bradlaugh incident I have followed Mr. Robertson.

removed and imprisoned in the Clock Tower, but was set free next day. A fresh vote of the House permitted him to affirm, subject to the decision of the law-courts on the legality of the proceeding. Judgment having been given against him in the following March (1881), Bradlaugh lost his seat, and was re-elected, although by a greatly diminished majority. On presenting himself to be sworn, he encountered the same refusal, and was afterwards forcibly prevented from entering the House. Next Session (1882) the same drama re-enacted itself a third time, with an important variation, for on this occasion Bradlaugh administered the oath to himself, disobeyed the order for his exclusion, and was expelled from the House. Re-elected once more, after a year's delay caused by complicated legal proceedings and abortive attempts to secure his peaceful admission, Bradlaugh repeated his old tactics, and, on their failure, voluntarily resigned his seat. Northampton returned him by a higher figure than ever, although not by so great a majority as in 1880. The long conflict was nearing its close. Retaining his seat at the General Election of 1885, Bradlaugh was allowed, by the ruling of a new Speaker, to be quietly sworn. In 1888 he carried an Affirmation Bill through both Houses of Parliament, with the support, among others, of the Archbishop of Canterbury. In 1891, while he lay dying, the Resolutions excluding him in former years were expunged from the records of the House.

It is possible that some of the majorities against Bradlaugh in the Parliament of 1880 may have been swelled by the unpopularity attached to his

name in certain circles as the publisher of a neo-Malthusian pamphlet and an assailant of the House of Brunswick. But that the surviving spirit of religious bigotry is responsible for by far the greater part of the hostility he encountered seems probable, especially when viewed in the light of another and much less famous episode, now to be fully related for the first time in an English history.

While the question of Parliamentary oaths was giving rise to acrimonious debates in the House of Commons, the more general question of the limits to free discussion in religious matters came once more before a court of law. In February, 1883, Mr. G. W. Foote, a leading member of the Secularist party, was prosecuted, with two other persons, for the publication of a special Christmas number of the *Freethinker,* in which were certain woodcuts ridiculing the objects of Christian worship. Probably the contents of the publication were of an offensive character—as the attacks on various royal and noble personages in *Punch* used to be—and would have disgusted many who had no more theological belief than Mr. Foote. But nobody was obliged to read the incriminated publication, and a mere glance at the cover was enough to warn off anyone to whom the inside would have been distasteful. What really provoked the prosecutors was the adverse influence they supposed such a work would exercise on the religious belief of the masses, and therefore they were really making war on freedom of religious discussion, purposely choosing for attack a mode of expressing opinion from which serious freethinkers, like Mr. John

Morley, would be careful to dissociate themselves. As the result of a trial conducted with gratuitous harshness by Mr. Justice North, Mr. Foote and his two associates were sentenced to twelve, nine, and three months' imprisonment respectively. "The same judge, it is recorded, let off with three months' imprisonment a ruffian who had killed a coffee-stall keeper with a kick on the face when he was refused a second cup of coffee until the first had been paid for."[1]

While undergoing his sentence Mr. Foote was prosecuted on another charge of blasphemy before a judge of a very different character from North, Lord Chief Justice Coleridge. In charging the jury, Coleridge demolished the old fallacy that Christianity is part of the common law, in any sense that would make the denial or the derision of its doctrines a crime independently of special legislation; besides expressing a general disapprobation of all religious persecution in a way that seemed to cover the particular charge brought before him. On this occasion the jury disagreed, and the prosecution was dropped.[2]

The attacks on Mr. Foote seem to have grown out of the conflict with Bradlaugh, whom it was hoped to implicate in the same charge of blasphemy, and thus to disable from continuing the fight for his seat. Ultimately, the affair resulted in a great extension of religious liberty, and this was brought about in a characteristically English fashion, by making a scene, or, rather, a succession of scenes.

[1] J. M. Robertson, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 326.

[2] Robertson, *op. cit.*, vol. ii., p. 333; H. Paul, *Modern England*, vol. iv., p. 307.

Plimsoll had compelled Parliament to give its serious attention to the grievances of sailors in merchantmen by a more extreme application of the same method ; and we shall now see how a group of Irishmen brought Home Rule into the first line of political interests by making themselves a nuisance to the House of Commons.

Isaac Butt, who had both created the Home Rule party and led it till his death in 1879, never advanced the cause one single step by the methods of eloquence, reason, and moderation. In 1875 he was joined by a young Irish Protestant squire of little education or rhetorical skill, but of supreme practical ability—Charles Stewart Parnell. The new member belonged to a type most unlike the conventional Irishman of English imagination, but represented more largely among the higher classes of Ireland than among the higher classes of England. Taciturn, imperious, unscrupulous, quick to form resolutions and patient in carrying them out—above all, looking to things, not to words—Parnell had read very few books in his life ; but one of those he did read, Froude's *English in Ireland,* had impressed him with a conviction, hardly anticipated by its brilliant author, that the English were incapable of governing his countrymen. A profound study of Parliamentary tactics suggested a way of obtaining their consent to the separation of the two islands—which was to make it impossible for the English to govern themselves. Obstruction under various forms had long been a familiar Parliamentary device for preventing the passage of measures that were sure to be carried

if they were put to a direct vote. But Parnell was the first to elaborate it into an instrument for making all legislation next to impossible. His effective employment of obstruction under the Conservative Government served to advertise his more solid qualities, and thus lifted him into a position of unquestioned supremacy among the Irish Nationalists, not only in Parliament, but all over the world. In Ireland he became President of the Land League, an association formed for the purpose of putting the tenants in possession of their holdings. An American tour enabled him to win over the Fenian organisation, and to secure a war treasure for the support of impecunious Home Rulers at Westminster. Soon after the meeting of the new Parliament he was elected Chairman of the Home Rule party, whose votes he henceforth directed with consummate judgment and inflexible determination.

As if to complete the distraction of Parliament, a Fourth party next presented itself on the scene. It never included above four members—Lord Randolph Churchill, Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, the present Sir John Gorst, and Mr. Arthur Balfour; but all four were of distinguished, and two of first-rate, ability. It may be said that the group owed its existence as such to the energy of Sir H. Drummond Wolff in protesting against Bradlaugh's admission to be sworn, and to the weakness of the Speaker in tolerating his intervention. But the lead was soon taken and kept by Lord Randolph Churchill, who made himself conspicuous by the violence of his attacks on

Bradlaugh, and indeed on all who supported the Affirmation Bill, describing them as "the scum of the population." Mr. Balfour, destined afterwards to supersede Lord Randolph in the competition for the future leadership of the Conservative party, professes that sort of religious intolerance which consists in denying the consistency of morality with theological unbelief. If Atheists behave morally, it is, according to him, because they have been brought up in a Christian society and remain permeated by its influence all their lives. Holding such views, he naturally wishes that a dogmatic education should be provided at the public expense for the greatest possible number of children.

For the rest, the Fourth party were distinguished from the main body of Conservatives by their methods rather than by their principles. To miss no opportunity of attacking the Government, and more particularly its illustrious chief, to urge on the official leaders of the Opposition, or to set them an example of factious procedure with a view to taking their places at the next division of the spoils, and, generally speaking, to get themselves talked about—such was the policy, partly copied from Parnell, which alone gave them the standing of a separate Parliamentary group. Their leader, Randolph Churchill, called himself a Tory Democrat. He certainly succeeded, by the employment of demagogic arts, in making himself popular with, or rather interesting to, the masses ; and even before the electoral discomfiture of Beaconsfield's foreign policy he had the merit of privately siding with Gladstone on the Eastern Question. He also favoured a wide extension of

the suffrage, and was prepared, in a rather indefinite way, to govern Ireland according to Irish ideas. Like many others, he looked to a revival of Protectionism under the specious title of Fair Trade as a remedy for England's declining commercial prosperity during the eighties, but advantageously distinguished himself from other Tory Democrats by a timely return to rational economics. Holding so much in common with the Liberals, it may be asked why he never joined their ranks. We can only answer that, as he first blazed into notoriety on the religious question, so a community of religious tradition kept him in touch with the electric main of Toryism when every other strand in the cord connecting him with his party had broken. And perhaps this may be taken for a sign that in the near future differences about the unseen world will more and more determine the lines of party division for Englishmen, as they already determine them for Frenchmen and Italians.

Irish discontent was not in 1880, as it had been twelve years before, the question on which the new Ministry had come into Office; but now, as under Earl Grey, it rapidly overspread the whole political horizon, throwing every other interest into the shade and tending to break the Liberal majority to pieces.

Reactionists taunted Gladstone with having failed to conciliate Ireland by his sacrifice of Protestant ascendancy. But Disestablishment, apart from its other advantages, had the merit of bringing the Land question full into view. As has been observed in a former chapter, religious differences

only masked the real evil, which was that the mass of Irish cultivators, less privileged than Egyptian Fellahin, could be removed from their holdings at the pleasure of landlords mostly belonging to a foreign race. We saw how Bright, following Mill, wished to convert them into peasant proprietors, and how, at Bright's suggestion, a slight attempt in that direction was made by the legislation of 1870. As it happened, however, subsequent developments took their start, not from the Purchase Clauses in the Land Act of that year, but from the provision of Compensation for Disturbance. Tenants who were evicted for not paying their rent received no benefit from this arrangement; and the prevailing agricultural distress, by multiplying the number of such insolvent debtors, gave harsh landlords a welcome opportunity for clearing them off their estates without expense. In the opinion of many besides the evicted tenants themselves, their inability to pay arose from excessive rents, difficult to find in the best times and impossible in the worst. To carry out the evictions military force was needed, involving conflicts between the soldiery and the mob, and leading, in some instances, after the eviction had been accomplished, to the murder of the landlord, of his agent, or of the incoming tenant. Then, when persons accused on vehement presumption of committing such murders were put on their trial, witnesses could hardly be induced to come forward against them or juries to convict.

These things had been the invariable accompaniment of Irish distress at other periods; the present agitation brought into existence a new terror before

unknown, or practised, if at all, on a much smaller scale. It consisted in refusing to do any service, paid or unpaid, for those who had offended the tenant interest, and were marked out by it for social excommunication. From its first victim, a certain Captain Boycott, an Englishman who acted as agent for Lord Earne's estate in County Mayo, this method has received the name, which has since passed from English into other languages, of "boycotting." Auguste Comte, in his social philosophy—which is, to a great extent, a romantic resuscitation of mediæval practices under modern forms—recommends the Catholic system of excommunication as a means of bringing moral pressure to bear on malefactors who manage to keep outside the grasp of the criminal law;[1] and George Eliot has illustrated the working of the principle in *Middlemarch* by Caleb Garth's refusal to remain in the employment of a rich man whom he suspects of doing something equivalent to murder. But Comte proposed that the boycott—to use its modern name—should be exercised only at the suggestion of a responsible priesthood, and should never be pushed to physical violence. Irish boycotting observed no such restriction, and rapidly degenerated into violence of the worst description. Parnell, who introduced it into the methods of the Land League, recommended that tenants taking farms whence their predecessors had been evicted should be treated as moral lepers, and left severely alone. But the victims of boycotting, as actually practised, were not left alone. They were threat-

[1] Comte, *Politique Positive*, vol. ii., p. 418; vol. iv., p. 335.

ened, hooted, mobbed, marked out for outrage and murder. Nor was this the worst. By a peculiarly atrocious aggravation the whole family of the offending or obnoxious person was involved in the persecution, and those who disobeyed the interdict by rendering any service to its victims were themselves boycotted also. If they entered a place of worship, it was deserted; if they fell ill, medical aid was forcibly withheld.

Professor Thorold Rogers, the Radical political economist, justly denounced boycotting as un-Christian; but that it should be practised, without rebuke from their priesthood, by the most Christian people in Europe seems to have excited no surprise.

Pending the preparation of their Land Bill, the Liberal Government proposed to meet the situation by a provisional Bill extending the payment of compensation for disturbance to tenants who should be evicted for non-payment of rent, where the inability to pay was the consequence of bad harvests alone.[1] In the Commons twenty Liberals voted against the Bill and fifty more abstained. It failed to pass the House of Lords, and would have failed had none but Liberal Peers voted on the second reading.

Next year (1881) the Government introduced and carried a measure which still forms the basis of Irish agrarian legislation. It embodied the principle of what are called the three F's—Fair Rent, Fixed Tenure, and Free Sale. What constituted a fair rent was to be decided by a Commission appointed for the purpose, and was to remain fixed

[1] H. Paul, *Modern England,* vol. iv., p. 164.

for fifteen years. So long as the tenant paid his judicial rent he could not be disturbed ; and, on a change of tenancy, he could sell his interest to his successor.

This amount of State interference with private contract was attacked by some persons as against the principles of Political Economy. They might as well have said that it was against the principles of astronomy to light fires in winter, or to ice one's drinks in summer. Their mistake was to overlook the difference between a science and an art. It is not the business of an economist as such to prescribe systems of land tenure, although he may supply information without which they cannot be usefully constructed. By combined observation and reasoning he may tell what system in given circumstances enables the largest produce to be extracted, for a continuance, from the soil. In this particular instance it does not seem to have been contended that the produce of Irish estates would be diminished by applying the three F's. Supposing it to be diminished, the loss might be more than compensated by the creation of a thriving peasantry. It was said that capital would not be laid out on improvements in a country where the rights of landlords were so little regarded. But capital was unlikely to seek a country where the collection of rents had become so dangerous. And to say that rents should be collected by military force was not a sufficient answer. Such a system of executing the law will not work, for the simple reason that it is too expensive. A saying much quoted at this time, that "force is no remedy," called forth a good deal of ridicule. On what, it

was asked, does all government rest if not on force? What other guarantee have we against the enemies of society? But government is neither an abstraction nor a celestial visitant armed with supernatural terrors. It rests on public opinion, and disposes of no more power than what opinion allows it to be supplied with. What were called the rights of property in Ireland merely expressed a state of opinion that was rapidly ceasing to exist.

Legislation in restraint of free contract was not limited to Ireland. In England also old ideas about leaving people to bargain for themselves underwent a certain modification. The elections of 1880 showed that Liberalism was making progress in the counties, long the stronghold of Toryism. As a recompense for this partial adhesion the Malt Tax was repealed, to the great joy of the landed interest in general; but the tenant farmers were still more gratified by a Bill enabling them to shoot hares and rabbits on the land they occupied. Hitherto the landlords had reserved for their own exclusive privilege the rather childish occupation of shooting these mischievous animals for amusement, with the result that a large stock of valuable food was annually sacrificed to their maintenance. It seems strange that at a time when the demand for good tenants exceeded the supply farmers should still find themselves unable to arrange by private contract for liberty to shoot or trap the depredators of their property; and that not only should this right have to be secured to them by statute, but that they should be precluded by statute from contracting themselves out of it. In

reality, however, freedom of contract rather gained than lost by the intervention of the Legislature. For Parliament became an agency by which the tenant farmers were able to bargain on more equal terms with the landlords; while the mass of the people reasserted their equitable claim to limit the rights of landed property in such a way that they should not be so abused as to diminish the food supply of the country.

A still more important advance was made in protecting those who could not protect themselves by the Employers' Liability Act of 1880. Hitherto employers of labour had been only liable to pay damages for injuries inflicted on outsiders through the negligence of their workmen; workmen injured by each other's negligence had no remedy against their common employer. For several years the Trade Unions had sought to remove this grievance by legislation, but in vain. Apparently, it did not interest those devoted friends of the people, Disraeli and Lord John Manners. At last, "through the pertinacity of Mr. Broadhurst [a Labour member] a partial reform was obtained from Mr. Gladstone's Government in 1880, in spite of the furious opposition of the great employers of labour sitting on both sides of the House." Employers were made liable for accidents caused by those to whom they had delegated their authority, such as foremen and superintendents. Workpeople might contract themselves out of the Act. "In the vast majority of cases," however, they were not induced to do so. As a consequence, we may suppose, of this increased responsibility the relative number of accidents has diminished. "Whereas in 1877 1 railway employee

in 95 was more or less injured, in 1889 the proportion was only 1 in 195. Whereas between 1873 and 1880 1 coalminer in 446 met his death annually, between 1881 and 1890 the proportion was only 1 in 519."[1]

"In 1893–94 [under a Liberal Government] a further amending Bill passed the House of Commons which swept away the doctrine of common employment and placed the workman with regard to compensation on the same footing as any other person. A clause making void any agreement whereby a workman forewent his right of action was rejected by the House of Lords, and the Bill was thereupon abandoned."[2] So far, Tory democracy does not seem to have been very active on behalf of its clients. But in 1897 it woke up. "The Workmen's Compensation Act of that year introduced into the law the new principle that an employer must, subject to certain limitations, insure his workmen against the risks of their employment. At the same time, the right of a workman to bargain away his claim to compensation was in reality, though not in form, nullified, since any contract whereby he foregoes the right to compensation secured him by the Workmen's Compensation Act is effective only where a general scheme for compensation agreed upon between the employer and the employed secures to the workmen benefits at least as great as those which they would derive from the Compensation Acts; and this arrangement must be sanctioned by a State official."[3] The

[1] Webb, *History of Trade Unionism,* pp. 351–52.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] A. V. Dicey, *Law and Opinion in England,* p. 282.

principle of liability for compensation has still more recently been extended to domestic servants by a Liberal House of Commons.

Thus, after a long delay, a principle first enunciated by Bentham's most trusted disciple, Edwin Chadwick,[1] and fully consistent with Bentham's philosophy, has been carried out.

Finally, in 1880, Mundella's Education Act completed the provision for securing the school attendance of working men's children by making it a duty imperative on the various local bodies commissioned for the purpose to exercise the powers of compulsion they already possessed. In 1891 elementary education was also made completely free, and this seems a logical consequence of making it compulsory, not because the State imposes a duty on the parents which they may or may not recognise, but because it deprives them of the addition to their income formerly provided by the compulsory labour of their children ; so that, were the children fed and even clothed at the expense of the community, their parents would not be in a better position than before. In this connection, let me again recall the fact that three Benthamites—Roebuck, George Grote, and Sir William Molesworth—were strong supporters of State education ; a proof, among others, that philosophical Radicalism was more consistent with itself through the whole nineteenth century than any other political school of the same duration.

Compulsion has secured the objects its promoters had in view. "It was calculated that in 1870 a

[1] *Dictionary of National Biography,* Supplement, vol. i., p. 407.

million and a half of children were receiving a fairly efficient education."[1] In 1882 the average attendance had risen to three millions, of whom two millions were accounted for by the Voluntary schools.[2] In 1895 these showed an increase of half a million, and the Board-schools of nearly a million.[3] In 1905 the total attendance for England and Wales was five millions and a quarter.[4]

Before reviewing the foreign policy and the Irish administrative policy of Gladstone's Government it will be convenient to say something about his last great legislative achievement, the provisional completion of Parliamentary Reform by the extension of Household Suffrage to the counties in 1884. For ten years previously this had been part of the Liberal programme, and resolutions for carrying it into effect were annually moved by the present Sir George Trevelyan in the Conservative House of Commons. In principle the Tories were not ostensibly opposed to the enfranchisement of the rural householder. "I have not the slightest doubt," said Disraeli, "that he possesses all those virtues which generally characterise the British people," and is as well qualified to vote as the town householder.[5] Being, however, a Conservative as well as a Tory, he thought it more important to keep our electoral system unchanged than to give the cottagers an opportunity for bringing their virtues to bear on the choice of Parliamentary

[1] Craik, *The State in its Relation to Education,* p. 119.
[2] *Ibid,* p. 130. [3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Whitaker's Almanack* for 1907, p. 268.
[5] Kebbel, *History of Toryism,* p. 371.

representatives. In fact, whatever Tory Democrats might say, the unenfranchised labourers were more likely to look on the Liberals, and especially on the party led by Gladstone, as their real friends; so that another Reform Bill could hardly fail to benefit that party.

A Bill for the extension of Household Suffrage to the counties involved such a vast increase in the number of rural voters as logically to necessitate a sweeping redistribution of seats. As in 1866, Gladstone considered it advisable to separate the two measures, putting franchise first. On that occasion his tactics had resulted in the division of his party and the wreck of his Government. This time—thanks, perhaps, to the Caucus—more perfect discipline prevailed, and his County Suffrage Bill passed the Commons by a large majority. But it was thrown out by the Lords, whose opposition gave rise to a great agitation for such a reform in the constitution of the upper House as would incapacitate it from permanently thwarting the popular will.

It cannot, however, be denied that on the question immediately at issue the Peers had a strong case. What they, or rather the Conservative leaders who represented them, maintained was that, as the strength of the Conservative party lay in the counties, and as they would probably lose a number of county seats under Household Suffrage, they could not be expected to give the Liberals this advantage except at the price of a considerable addition to the county representation as a whole, with a corresponding diminution of the seats assigned to the boroughs. And not only had the

Peers a good case, but they had also a strong position. For, practically, no change could be made in the constitution of the Upper House without an appeal to the people; and, under the existing electoral law, such an appeal might well have resulted in the return of a Conservative majority.

Thanks partly to the Queen's intervention, a way was found out of the deadlock. The leaders on both sides met and arranged a scheme of redistribution by which the counties gained so many seats as actually to return more than half the members for England and Wales, instead of something under two-fifths as before. The result of their private deliberations was obediently accepted by their followers on both sides, and the two Bills, for Franchise and Redistribution, passed into law before the end of 1884.

As it happened, the great increase in the number of county seats redounded entirely to the benefit of the Liberals, and saved them from a crushing defeat at the next General Election, which revealed the fact that Conservatism had been making extraordinary progress in the great cities, especially London, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, and Sheffield, where the Liberals had confidently reckoned on carrying from two-thirds to three-fourths of the seats.[1] In Ireland also the loss to Liberalism under the new franchise was great, the vast majority of members returned being Parnellites and the remainder Conservatives.

[1] *The Radical Programme,* pp. 5–6. Instead of fifteen Tories, as the writer expected, London sent up thirty-seven (*The Political History of England,* 1837–1901, p. 371).

In order to explain the great loss of popularity suffered by the Liberals during their five years' tenure of office, we have now to pass briefly in review the foreign, colonial, and Irish policy of Gladstone's Government.

With regard to the Eastern Question, Gladstone, as might be expected, assumed an attitude markedly contrasting with that of his predecessor. As a reward for their heroic exertions in the recent war, it had been agreed that the Montenegrins should receive an accession of territory at Turkey's expense. But the Porte was in no hurry to make the required cessions until a naval demonstration of the Powers, organised by England, compelled it to yield. Europe had also recommended the cession of Thessaly and Epirus to Greece, but rather as a pious wish than as a command. In 1881 Gladstone again brought pressure to bear at Constantinople, with so much effect that about seven-tenths of the territory in question was added to the Hellenic kingdom.

It has already been mentioned how, by a righteous reversal of Lytton's policy, Candahar was re-united to Cabul. To undo the mischief wrought by the late Government in South Africa proved a harder task. Gladstone, in his electoral campaign, had very properly denounced the annexation of the Transvaal as an attack on freedom; but after taking office he showed no inclination to give back the Boers their independence, although the Radical section of his Cabinet desired it. Sir Owen Lanyon, a British officer charged with the administration of the Transvaal, described the Boers, in language recalling that which had been used of

the Yankees a little over a century earlier, as "mortal cowards."[1] Five days after he wrote those words the Boers were besieging him in Pretoria, and the whole country was up in arms. Upon this our authorities began to treat. While negotiations were still pending 200 Boers attacked and destroyed a small British force at Majuba Hill, the British general, Sir George Colley, falling in the fight. Many people at home, animated with a spirit like Cetywayo's, thought that we should have avenged this defeat before letting the Transvaal go; but fortunately the Prime Minister was not among the number. The peace negotiations were concluded, and a Convention, made in 1884, recognised the South African Republic as an independent State, subject to the veto of the British Crown on any treaty it might make with a foreign Power except the Orange Free State. It was also stipulated that "white men were not to be excluded from living or trading in any part of the Republic, nor to be taxed more heavily than native burghers."[2] At that time the gold mines had not been opened, nor was any value attached to the possession of the country, except in so far as its independence might endanger our hold on the Cape, so cherished as a link in the long chain of our communications with India.

The safety of India supplies the key to our whole foreign policy during the nineteenth century, except that which was inspired by sympathy with the struggles of other nations for freedom. Indian

[1] H. Paul, *Modern England*, vol. iv., p. 195.
[2] *Ibid*, pp. 193–202, 323.

interests were responsible for Beaconsfield's attitude towards Turkey and Afghanistan, as well as for his purchase of the Suez Canal shares. Nominally in the interest of the bondholders, but really from mutual jealousy, in order that neither might acquire a position of exclusive predominance, England and France established a joint control over the finances of Egypt, reducing the authority of the Khedive to a shadow. Impatient at this tutelage, Ismail dismissed the Controllers in 1879. Thereupon the two Powers, with the Sultan's consent, promptly deposed the old tyrant, replacing him by his son Tewfik.

On his way into exile Ismail exclaimed: "I leave my country as a Schleswig-Holstein to England and France!" His prophecy has not been fulfilled. Two years afterwards a military mutiny, headed by the misguided patriot Arâbi Pasha, led to the temporary deposition of Tewfik and the release of Egypt from foreign domination. A massacre of the European residents in Alexandria (June, 1881) left no alternative but armed intervention. France, made prudent by the terrible experiences of 1870, refused to take part in the restoration of order by military force. After a vain appeal for co-operation to Italy, England undertook the task alone. Remodelled by a democratic Government and led by a democratic general, Sir Garnet Wolseley, our army did its work with admirable efficiency and promptness, defeating Arâbi and entering Cairo before the end of the summer. France retained her financial rights, and has ever since continued to exercise them hurtfully for Egypt in the interest of a capitalist ring; but, politically, the dual control

came to an end. Against the intentions of the Ministers who sent out the expedition, a virtual English Protectorate has since been established in Egypt, thereby securing the alternative route to India.

Before long, however, new and almost insuperable difficulties arose out of what seemed such an easy conquest. With the help of English officers Ismail had built up a huge Sudanese empire, containing ten millions of inhabitants and extending from the Nubian frontier to the great lakes of Central Africa. As recent converts to Islam, the Sudanese were animated by a spirit of passionate religious fanaticism. Content to obey a Mohammedan ruler at Cairo, they revolted against his infidel successors. Under the guidance of a prophet known as the Mahdi, whose career recalls the legendary exploits of a Moses or a Samuel, they attacked and surrounded the Egyptian garrison, scattered in helpless isolation over a vast extent of inland territory. An Egyptian army sent to relieve the garrisons under Hicks Pasha, an English officer in the service of the Khedive, fell into an ambuscade and was annihilated, the commander himself being among the slain.

Hitherto the English Government had disclaimed all responsibility for what Tewfik chose to do or not to do beyond the southern frontier of Egypt. It was his business to maintain or to withdraw the garrisons as he pleased. Finally, under pressure of public opinion, orders were sent from London for the evacuation of the Sudan. At the suggestion of an impulsive newspaper editor, the perilous mission of bringing off the besieged garrisons was

entrusted to an impulsive mystic, General Gordon. As a young man Gordon had crushed a formidable rebellion against the Emperor of China. In middle life he had done more than any other man to establish Egyptian dominion in Central Africa, using his authority to suppress the slave trade. What he might now have done had his advice been accepted or adequate support sent out in response to his urgent messages from Khartoum, we do not know. As it was, he held out for ten months against overwhelming odds. An expedition sent to relieve him arrived too late. Hearing of its approach, the Mahdi delivered his final assault on January 26th, 1885. Khartoum fell, and Gordon, who had been believed, perhaps believed himself, to bear a charmed life, was among the slain.

Before England had recovered from her indignation, and Gladstone's Government from the discredit of what Randolph Churchill called the abandonment of the Christian hero, war with Russia seemed close at hand. It had been arranged that the frontier between Afghanistan and Russian Turkestan should be drawn by a joint Commission acting on behalf of the two interested Powers. While the delimitation was still in progress the Afghans occupied a place called Penjdeh, of which Russia claimed to be the legitimate owner. Without waiting for the Commission's award, the Russians attacked and drove them out of it with much loss of life. Such, at least, was the account received and credited in England, with the result that serious preparations for war were begun. On the other hand, it was maintained by the Russian

authorities, not without some support in the English Press, that the Afghans had been the aggressors and had brought their fate on themselves. At first the two Governments agreed to submit the question to arbitration, but afterwards preferred arranging it by direct negotiation. Penjdeh remained Russian, and no more was heard of the alleged outrage on our Afghan allies. Its historic effect was to lower England in the eyes of Europe and the Liberal Cabinet in the eyes of England, although their rivals would have been even less inclined to make war for such a quarrel.

Gladstone and his Government were still more unfortunate in their relations with disorder in Ireland than with disorder in Africa and Asia. Their provisional settlement of the agrarian question only brought the Nationalist question more fully into view. They prosecuted Parnell on a charge of seditious conspiracy, but failed to satisfy a Dublin jury of his guilt. Then, taking advantage of the exceptional powers conferred on them by the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, they imprisoned him without a trial. The only apparent result was a fresh epidemic of agrarian outrages. Parnell, on his side, soon got tired of being in prison, and promised, if he were let out, to co-operate with the Government in passing Liberal measures. He was, in fact, set free after a short detention, but not, as would appear, on the strength of his promise, which proved rather embarrassing than otherwise to those who were to benefit by it, and whom public opinion now accused of leaning for support on a rebel and a traitor.

Anyhow, a more gracious treatment of Ireland was in contemplation. W. E. Forster, Gladstone's Irish Secretary, had given much offence to Irish susceptibilities by his unconciliatory manners and roughly repressive administration. His position gradually became untenable, and on May 2nd, 1882, he resigned. Four days afterwards his successor, Lord Frederick Cavendish, Lord Hartington's brother, was murdered in the Phœnix Park, Dublin, with his Under Secretary, T. H. Burke. There had been no intention of killing Lord Frederick; he lost his life in a vain attempt to interfere between the assassins and Burke, their destined victim. But if the new Chief Secretary fell by accident, his predecessor Forster and the Viceroy, Lord Cowper, only escaped by accident, for the original plot had been directed against them as well as against Burke.[1] In England many people looked on the crime as the natural result of making any concessions to Irish demands. A new Coercion Bill was rushed through Parliament, followed, it is true, by a Bill relieving tenants from the arrears of rent, with partial compensation to the landlords from the unspent Irish Church Fund. Meanwhile, agrarian outrage and murder continued to rage with greater virulence than before; and Nationalist emissaries from America exploded parcels of dynamite in the public buildings of London. A number of criminals, including the Phœnix Park murderers, were discovered and punished; but this did not promote a better feeling between England and Ireland.

[1] H. Paul, *Modern England*, vol. iv., p. 293.

In the face of such difficulties and disasters it is a marvel that Gladstone's Government should last so long and achieve so much both at home and abroad. What finally brought about their fall was a proposed increase of taxation necessitated by the Sudanese and Afghan muddles. Their new imposts threatened the public-house interest, which, as usual, found staunch support on the Tory benches. An understanding with the Conservative chiefs that, if they came into office, the Coercion Act of 1882 should not be renewed secured Parnell's support. The great Ministry fell by a majority of 12 (June, 1885). So many Liberals were absent unpaired as to give the idea that the leaders rode for a fall.

Lord Salisbury came into office with a Ministry of caretakers, including Lord Randolph Churchill as its most conspicuous member. In the autumn a General Election took place with an electorate five million strong, of whom three million belonged to the working classes. Voting began, as usual, in the boroughs, and there the Conservatives won a series of unexpected successes, with the help of the Irish vote, which the Nationalist leaders had directed to be thrown on their side, or rather against the Liberals, whom they had now come to regard with deadly hatred. But the newly-enfranchised agricultural labourer broke away from the squire and the parson, turning the scale against Conservatism to such an extent that only 249 supporters of Lord Salisbury were returned. The final result was a deadlock; for the Parnellites numbered 86, and were these to combine with the 249 Conservatives—as they certainly would at the first opportunity, in order to make all government

impossible — their united forces would exactly balance the Liberal strength, which only amounted to 335 in a House of 670 members.

In such circumstances the Liberal leader had to choose between Home Rule, against which he had lately declared, as the price of the Irish vote, and exclusion from office until the next General Election, if not for the rest of his life. He chose Home Rule, with what ruinous consequences to his party the next chapter will show.

Chapter XVIII.

TANGLED ISSUES

When the new Parliament met, in January, 1886, Gladstone had already declared for Home Rule. He soon found himself in a position to ascertain how far his old political associates were prepared to join in his change of front. Defeated on an Amendment to the Address by a coalition of Liberals and Parnellites, Lord Salisbury resigned, and was succeeded by the aged statesman whose place he had taken little more than seven months previously. The new Cabinet were agreed on the principle that a certain measure of self-government should be granted to Ireland. This, however, was going further than some of Gladstone's late colleagues were prepared to follow. Sir Henry James, the greatest Parliamentary lawyer in the Liberal party, refused the Lord Chancellorship rather than support Home Rule in any form. For the same reason Lord Hartington would not return to office, as neither would Lord Derby, who had left the Conservatives—he never was a Tory—to join Gladstone a few years before. Lord Selborne, Mr. Goschen, and John Bright, who had all formerly held high office under the same chief, also offered an uncompromising opposition to the new departure. Bright's name carried the highest authority of all, from his long championship of the

Irish cause and the absolute sincerity of his political convictions.

More calamitous still was the loss of two Ministers, Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Trevelyan, who resigned when Gladstone's Home Rule Bill was laid before the Cabinet. Mr. Chamberlain had hitherto been known as the most advanced of the official Liberals, even standing sponsor to a recently-published "Radical Programme"; and many looked up to him as the future leader of the party. Mr. Trevelyan's talent was literary rather than oratorical; but he also had been named among possible future Premiers; he had two years' experience of Ireland as Chief Secretary; and, above all, his reputation for honesty was of the highest. It augured ill for any measure that these men could not accept it.

The Home Rule Bill proposed to give Ireland a Parliament of her own, with an Executive responsible to it alone. It was known that an Irish House of Commons, if left to itself, would imitate the British Colonies in establishing Protection; accordingly, provision was made that it should not meddle with trade. It was known that the priests, if they were permitted, would use their influence to procure a large endowment for the Roman Catholic Church from the Dublin Parliament; accordingly, endowments to any religious community were forbidden. It was known that the gift of Home Rule without the power of confiscating land-rents to any extent would be derisory; therefore, it was arranged that provision should be made in a separate Bill for buying out such landlords as would not trust the new Legislature to protect their

rights, the purchase money to be raised on the credit of the imperial exchequer.

The Home Rule Bill was defeated on the second reading by a majority of thirty, ninety-three Liberals voting against it (June 7th). Gladstone dissolved, as he had a perfect right to do, for with such a division of parties no Government was possible. The constituencies returned a decisive answer. Gladstone's Liberal opponents—or, as they were now called, the Liberal Unionists—lost fifteen seats, but the Conservatives gained sixty-seven, thus nearly quadrupling the majority against Home Rule. For the third time in little over a year there was a change of Ministers, Lord Salisbury resuming the Premiership, with Lord Randolph Churchill for his second in command. But the victory had really been won by the Liberal Unionists, and, above all others, by Mr. Goschen, who became Chancellor of the Exchequer on Lord Randolph's resignation and political eclipse in the following December. In after years, as First Lord of the Admiralty, this distinguished statesman took a leading part in that great work of naval reconstruction which has made our fleet superior to any hostile combination ever likely to be put in line against it. Lord Goschen—to give him his present title—is the son of German parents, and is clearly filled with that intense patriotism, comparable to the enthusiasm of converts, which so often animates the children of foreign settlers towards their adopted country, and which is everywhere noticeable among European Jews.

Gladstone had sincerely desired that Home Rule

should not be treated as a party question; and he had offered to co-operate with Lord Salisbury in bringing about a settlement of it by the Conservative Ministry. But that such an idea should have occurred to him as feasible shows with how much ignorance of the world the world may be governed. What misled him on this occasion was probably the success of his negotiations the year before with the Conservative leaders on the details of the Redistribution Bill. But the two cases offered no parallel, for it was precisely on the details, not on the principle, of popular representation that disagreements existed. With Home Rule the principle was everything; and Conservatism might as well have ceased to exist as accept it. Irish autonomy meant a fundamental change in the Constitution; a personal offence to the Queen, who hated it; a measure, more or less, of confiscation; a danger to Protestantism; an apparent triumph to the enemies of England. Justice, freedom, nationality, were the leading ideas invoked on behalf of the new departure; but these had long been watchwords of Liberalism. They might appeal to individual Conservatives like Lord Carnarvon, whom a brief residence in Dublin as Viceroy had converted to Home Rule; to the mass of the party they stood for that particular kind of canting sentiment which is used as a cloak for selfish ambition.

Nor was this all. Apart from principle, and considered merely from the Parliamentary point of view, Liberalism had everything to gain, Toryism everything to lose, by a scheme of Home Rule which would exclude the Irish members from the House of Commons. It meant the speedy return

of Gladstone to power with a solid majority of 112 at his back, relieved from the Bradlaugh question, relieved from Parnellite obstruction, relieved from the Fourth Party, installed for the rest of his active life as omnipotent dictator of Great Britain. On the other hand, before Parliament met it was already evident to Lord Salisbury, as to the whole world, that a considerable section of the Liberal party would abandon their leader on the Irish question and coalesce with the Conservatives, thus giving them a majority in the whole House.

Many thought at the time, and many perhaps still think, that Home Rule was imposed on the Liberal party by the will of its chief. If we understand this to mean that it was accepted without enthusiasm, the notion is not true. It would rather seem that the great majority of Liberals were already leaning that way, and were only waiting for a signal from the leader to declare their conversion. It is no proof to the contrary that eight Liberal Unionists out of nine retained their seats, and that they formed a larger proportion of the party in the Parliament of 1886 than in the Parliament of 1885. For, by an agreement between the Unionist leaders, Liberal candidates who had voted against Home Rule were supported by the Conservatives in nearly every contested election; and many were old favourites whose personal popularity made it hopeless for a Home Ruler to be run against them. By the nature of the case these men, being advanced in life, were the first to drop off, and their seats, as they fell vacant, were generally filled up by Gladstonian Liberals, thus giving rise to an

exaggerated impression that the country was coming round to Home Rule. On Gladstone himself the support of his party, which he confounded with the English working classes, acted as a powerful stimulant, converting what seems at first to have been a resolution adopted solely on grounds of expediency into an ethical conviction held and expressed with all the energy of his rich and passionate nature; while his fervid utterances, in their turn, communicated fresh enthusiasm to the followers, whose opinions he fed with an inexhaustible stream of argument and illustration.

Assuming that the masses were on his side, the new leader of the Home Rule party declared that in all the great political issues of the previous sixty years they had been right and the classes wrong. It was candid on his part to say so, for the clearest instance of such a correct judgment had been given in the case of the American War, when he himself had sided with the slave-holders against the majority of the English people; but he might have remembered how, in his youth, the masses were against Catholic Emancipation, which the classes, as represented by an unreformed House of Commons, had repeatedly approved. A still better evidence of fallibility is that the oracle does not always agree with itself. In three General Elections, coming sufficiently near together, a plebiscite has been practically taken on Home Rule. It was rejected in 1886, accepted in 1892, and rejected again in 1895.

Besides the masses, which have proved such an untrustworthy tribunal, Gladstone appealed to another and more select authority, the historians,

whom he claimed as supporters of Home Rule. But neither could this special jury agree on a verdict. Discounting politicians who write history, Froude, Lecky, Seeley, and Professor Goldwin Smith stood for the Union; Freeman, Gardiner, York Powell, and Mr. Oscar Browning for Home Rule.

On the other hand, a contemporary writer, himself holding advanced Liberal opinions, exaggerates when he says that the intellect of the country was against Home Rule.[1] There certainly was a preponderance of distinguished names on the Unionist side. Herbert Spencer, Tyndall, Huxley, Henry Sidgwick, James Martineau, Jowett, Fitzjames and Leslie Stephen, Tennyson, Browning, Swinburne, Matthew Arnold, make up, with the historians already named, an imposing list; and in some ways every one of them was a Liberal. But against these we have to set, besides the Home Rule historians, Ruskin, Mr. George Meredith, Mr. Bryce, Mr. John Morley, Mr. Frederic Harrison, Professor Beesly, and, as a later accession, the present Sir George Trevelyan, who rejoined the Gladstonian Liberals on the removal of certain particulars to which he objected in the Home Rule Bill of 1886.

Turning from authority to reason, let us now consider the arguments by which the adhesions on either side were ultimately determined. Those in favour of Home Rule—besides the motives of political expediency already specified, which probably suggested Gladstone's scheme in the

[1] Mr. Herbert Paul, in *Modern England,* vol. v., p. 58.

first instance and won for it the adhesion of his party as a whole, in the hope of securing their Parliamentary position for another term of years—were the great Liberal ideas of nationality, justice, and freedom. Indeed, it is a principle admitted by the best English Conservatives, as well as by most Liberals, that nations are, on the whole, best governed by themselves—that is to say, by rulers of their own race and their own choice; and it was on this principle that the efforts of Greece, Belgium, Italy, Hungary, Poland, and the Balkan Peninsula had met with such ardent sympathy among Englishmen. Now, a century of agitation proved that the Irish people constituted a true nationality, visibly marked off as such by the natural frontier of the sea. Was it not, then, unjust and unreasonable to withhold from them what the Continental despots had been so severely censured for taking from the inhabitants of alien countries subjected, by conquest or inheritance, to their sway?

There is, however, another principle that sometimes meets and overbears the claim of a people to be free, and that is no other than the supreme law of self-preservation. It was invoked on this occasion by England just as it had been invoked, with the full approval of many advanced Liberals, by the majority of the American people against the pretension of the Slave States to set up an independent Confederacy, by the Swiss Protestant Cantons against the Sonderbund, and by the French Jacobins of 1793 against the real or supposed Girondist intention of substituting a loose federal tie for the one and indivisible Republic. It was,

and still is, alleged by Unionists that Irish independence would mean a breach of the bond which constitutes the integrity of the British Archipelago, and holds it together as a single State of the first order. Granting the existence of a steady movement towards the emancipation of nationalities in modern Europe, there is, they say, another movement towards the formation of great agglomerations, and this movement, whenever the two have collided, has proved the stronger, as in the examples already cited of Switzerland and America, to which may be added the attempted Federal Republic of Spain in 1873.

Again, Irish independence would mean more than the deduction of so much territory and population from the resources of Britain ; it would mean their addition to the resources of any Power with which we might at any time be at war. More especially, it would mean the conversion of an island only four hours' steam from England's shores into a permanent outpost of the United States, with its millions of American-Irish citizens in a state of permanent conspiracy for the destruction of England and her empire.

To these alarmist prophecies the English Home Rulers replied that there was no wish to break up the unity of the archipelago or of the empire : what Ireland wanted was not national independence, but autonomy, liberty to manage her own affairs in her own way. So much had been conceded, with the happiest results, to England's great transoceanic colonies ; and the same results might reasonably be expected to follow from Home Rule. Experience also showed that somewhat similar

arrangements had succeeded perfectly in the cases of Norway and Hungary, neither of which kingdoms wanted complete independence.

Unfortunately for the Liberal optimists, Parnell himself, addressing an American audience, had announced, in his own name and in the name of his friends, their intention of not resting until they had "destroyed the last link that keeps Ireland bound to England"; while Mr. Sexton, the most eloquent of the Nationalist orators, had proclaimed that between England and Ireland there never could be any feeling but the passion of hate. The history of their relations also seemed to show that every concession to Ireland had been used as leverage for gaining further concessions, Catholic Emancipation leading to the demand for Repeal, Disestablishment and agrarian legislation to obstruction and Home Rule. Colonial self-government could not be quoted as a precedent; for, in the first place, Canada and Australia were bound by the strongest motives of self-interest to keep up their connection with the mother country; and, in the next place, if they chose to separate, whatever the loss to her prestige, England's power would remain what it was before, or would even be increased by no longer having distant dependencies to defend. As for the European parallels, Norway, by severing the last link with Sweden, has turned the tables on Separatist logic; while Hungary has shown herself a permanent danger to the stability of the Austrian monarchy.

Besides the general presumption arising from the whole tenour of Irish agitation, there were particular reasons for believing that Home Rule

would be merely a stepping-stone to complete separation. Gladstone's scheme left Ireland with four formidable grievances, on any one of which a claim to complete independence might be based. It imposed on Ireland an amount of imperial taxation which Parnell declared to be much in excess of what was just. It withheld freedom to abolish Free Trade, a disability which Irish agitators might be trusted to represent as a tyrannous restriction imposed in the interests of English manufacturers. It forbade religious endowments; and, in view of the fact that the Protestant Church had retained a handsome share of its former wealth, the Roman Church might be expected to claim, on principles of elementary justice, a subsidy from the State of at least four times that amount—say thirty millions. Finally, the new Land Bill, tending to make the State the universal landlord, while it lowered rents considerably, transferred their collection from agencies that might be appeased or frightened to an inexorable and irresistible authority. All these grievances might, of course, be remedied with the consent of the English Parliament. But the very necessity of having to appeal at every step to an alien Legislature for leave to exercise a natural right would be resented as an intolerable humiliation by a people that had learned to look on itself as a nation among the nations of the world.

Such, stated on the broadest grounds of political expediency, was the Unionist case against Home Rule. Yet at that period there prevailed through all grades of English society, from the Heir

Apparent to the humblest peasant, and from the most reactionary Ritualist priest to the narrowest Nonconformist minister, such a passion for justice, and such hopeless weariness of the Irish incubus, that all these problematic perils might have been cheerfully faced in the confidence that England need only stretch out her invincible arm at any moment, if necessary, to take back her gift if it were abused—had justice and liberty only spoken with an undivided voice. What gave the situation such tragic poignancy, what shattered the higher Liberalism from crown to base, was the perplexity, the ambiguity, of those ideal guides. Liberal sympathies had gone out whole-heartedly to Italy, Hungary, and Poland, for there they were given to nations at unity with themselves. United Ireland only existed as the title of a violent party newspaper. It was claimed that a third of the Irish people, and *that* a third including far the larger share of Irish property, industry, intelligence, and enlightenment, looked with dismay on the prospect of being handed over to the control of an ignorant and ravenous populace, led partly by unscrupulous demagogues and partly by the most fanatical priesthood in Catholic Europe. Now, what priestly dictation meant had recently been shown in the English Parliament by the object-lesson of the Bradlaugh case. A Secularist member, himself Ireland's friend, had been forbidden either to affirm or to swear, because in division after division the scale had been turned against religious liberty by Home Rule—that is, Rome Rule—votes. A very intelligible anti-clericalism had perhaps something to do with the fact that, among English Rationalists,

Huxley, Froude, Professor Goldwin Smith, and Mr. Swinburne were Unionists, as were also the Irish Rationalists, Tyndall and Lecky, to whom may be added Professor Thomas Maguire, a Roman Catholic, but also a Hegelian, and therefore, presumably, a Modernist. Even assuming Irish Protestants to be as a rule no more liberal than Irish Catholics, it was no longer in their power to be intolerant, while under Home Rule they would be less able to defend themselves than the Catholics if, as many believed likely, they were to be attacked by such modern methods of persecution as boycotting. At any rate, the passionate hostility of Protestant Ulster to Home Rule, amounting to threats of civil war if it were granted, showed that revolt against an alien domination was a game that two could play at. And the prospect of having English troops called in to shoot down men whose only crime was their fidelity to England did not appeal to the imaginative sympathy of the English electorate.

Ulster could at least fight for independence from Celtic and Catholic control. The half million or so of Anglican Protestants scattered over the three other provinces would be left as sheep to the slaughter—a likely fate if it was thought that they stood between the ultra-Nationalists and the attainment of their final object, the severance of the last link that bound Ireland to England. Before risking such horrors, it might be as well to try what could be done by less heroic remedies than separation, to give the new agrarian legislation time to do its healing work; above all, to substitute steady execution of the law—what Lord Salisbury called

twenty years of resolute government—for a policy of alternate coercion and concession. O'Connell's Repeal agitation had collapsed ; the Young Ireland agitation had collapsed ; why should not Home Rule, when confronted by the same steady resistance, disappear into the same limbo of unrealised dreams ?

So evenly balanced were the arguments for and against Irish autonomy that the English democracy for a time let its decision hang on rather petty personal considerations. Charges of encouraging political assassination were brought against Parnell, and found, on inquiry, to rest on forged documents; so people thought that, as a compensation, he ought to be allowed to lead a Parliament on College Green. Then he was so unfortunate as to be detected in an unlawful amour, and, being only an uncrowned king, had not authority enough to save himself from exposure in the Divorce Court. The English Home Rule Nonconformists, more squeamish than their adored leader, Gladstone, decided to boycott Home Rule unless it parted company with the only Irish politician capable of managing the Irish Nationalist representatives. These men had re-elected him to be their Chairman after the Divorce Court scandal, but they reversed their vote by a large majority in deference to the English Liberal sentence, and the mass of the Irish people, led by the Catholic hierarchy, followed suit. Parnell fought desperately for his position ; but the struggle broke down his health, and in less than a year he was dead.

Nine months afterwards a General Election

placed the Home Rule Liberals, with Gladstone at their head, in power (July, 1892). But their majority only amounted to forty-two; and without the Nationalist vote they would have been in a minority of somewhat more than that figure. In fact, the tide that ran so high after Parnell's vindication had been receding ever since his exposure in the Divorce Court, and had not been arrested by his death. When the General Election of 1892 took place the tide was, so to speak, half-way out; and this unsettled state of public opinion accounts for the small majority given to Home Rule by the whole kingdom, and to the Union by Great Britain.

A second Home Rule Bill was introduced in 1893. It differed from the Bill of 1886 in two important particulars. Ireland was still to be represented in the British Parliament; but her delegation was to be reduced from 103 to 80—that is to say, nearly as many as she would be entitled to in an imperial Parliament elected on the principle of strictly proportionate representation. And no provision was made for compensating the landlords who would certainly be dispossessed of their estates by a tenants' Parliament sitting in Dublin. A Land Purchase Act had, it is true, been passed by the Unionist Parliament; but it did not compel the present owners to sell their estates for whatever the occupiers might think fit to offer, nor was the capital provided large enough to go round if every landlord stood out for a fair price.

Such as it was, this Bill passed the Commons by a majority of thirty-four. Some Liberals are reported to have voted for it only because they

were sure that it would be kicked out by the Lords. And kicked out it was in the Upper House by a majority of more than ten to one. A more fatal blow to Home Rule was Gladstone's resignation next year. The Prime Minister was in his eighty-fifth year, and his senses were beginning to fail. But increasing years and infirmities only made him more and more the object of popular idolatry, so much so that his withdrawal from public life had the effect of alienating many from a cause which, but for his authority, they would never have embraced ; or rather it had the effect of making them more sensible to arguments which his authority had hitherto neutralised.

To complete the misfortunes of the Liberal party, Lord Rosebery was chosen to succeed Gladstone as Prime Minister over the head of Sir William Harcourt, by far the ablest and most successful of his colleagues. Harcourt was understood to have no liking for his new chief; nor, with Lord Rosebery's very tepid Liberalism, could any cordial co-operation between the two be expected. England does not love Cabinets that are divided against themselves ; and such was the weakness of the new Ministry that it fell in June, 1895, before a vote which really only concerned one of its members, the present Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. Lord Salisbury resumed office, this time in coalition with the leading Liberal Unionists, the Duke of Devonshire, Mr. Chamberlain, Sir Henry James, and Lord Lansdowne. His nephew, Mr. Arthur Balfour, who, as Irish Secretary, had won the highest reputation for administrative ability and debating skill, became Leader of the House of

Commons, with the prospective inheritance of the Premiership.

On an appeal to the people, the late Liberal Administration—decapitated, discredited, divided, and defeated—had no chance against so powerful and brilliant a band. With the lowest class of voters a less worthy motive than respect for intellectual superiority helped to swell the Unionist ranks. In response to a strong demand for Temperance legislation, Harcourt had introduced a Local Veto Bill, and, although it had to be dropped, the publicans and their clients took the alarm. Those who, like Archbishop Magee, would rather see England free than sober, combining with those who would rather see England drunk than rationally educated, rallied to the cry of Beer and the Bible. The result was a Unionist majority of three to one in England without Wales, and of 152 in the whole kingdom. For the first time since 1874 the Conservatives had a majority over all other parties combined.

The English Empire had been built up by isolated adventurers, with little help or countenance from the nation acting as a whole. Under the guidance of Mr. Chamberlain, the strongest personality in the new Cabinet, England now entered on a career of conscious, grandiose, not always scrupulous, self-assertion and territorial extension. An Egyptian army organised and commanded by English officers overthrew the Dervish host and reconquered the Sudan, constituting it, in a more peculiar sense than even Egypt, as a dependency of England. An attempt made by Frenchmen to

seize a derelict portion of territory formerly subject to the Khedive was abandoned under the menace of our irresistible sea-power. The Transvaal, after a struggle more glorious to the Boers than to ourselves, was re-annexed, the Orange Free State sharing its fate. Russia, our only formidable rival in Asia, saw her armies and fleets destroyed by England's ally, Japan, with whom we have since become more closely linked by a treaty of mutual guarantees.

In order to maintain their majority intact, the Unionist Government, against all precedent, dissolved Parliament in 1900, while the South African War was still in progress. They retained office with a slightly increased majority, but with no more special mandate than to fight until the Boer Republics were subdued. Success proved ruinous to themselves and to their party, which now threw over every pretence of holding Liberal, or even Conservative, principles. In 1902 Mr. Balfour passed a new Education Bill abolishing School Boards and throwing Voluntary schools, which were chiefly Church schools, on the rates—a proposal that even in 1870 had to be withdrawn. It had always seemed a gross injustice to Nonconformists and Secularists that the teaching of what they thought mischievous superstition should be subsidised from the national exchequer. But to resist the payment of imperial taxation because one small portion of it went to help Church schools would have been found impossible in practice. On the other hand, the levying of a local rate in aid of Ritualism or Romanism both made the abuse itself

more palpable and offered its enemies a priceless opportunity for protesting against it. A campaign of passive resistance, as the refusal to pay the new school rates was called, began all over England, and has continued year after year ever since, numbers of men and women allowing their furniture to be seized and sold rather than submit quietly to so hateful an imposition. They were not breaking the law any more than the Parliamentary obstructives break it; they were simply leaving the law to take care of itself. Meanwhile, a vastly greater number of Englishmen, with the English love of fair play in their hearts, although they did not see their way to following the example of the passive resisters, watched them with silent sympathy, accumulating stores of burning indignation against the Government and the party which, without any mandate from the country, had given occasion for such a crying scandal. Others rather welcomed the new Act, in the clear prevision that its authors would ultimately be found to have defeated their own end. For they had facilitated the eventual assimilation of all State-aided schools, voluntary or otherwise, to the old Board schools, which were unsectarian: what was more, they had paved the way to secular education in all elementary schools—a step already taken in the United States—since Church people on their side objected to simple Bible teaching as itself only another form of sectarian religion.

While Mr. Balfour was reviving the old system of privilege and protection in religion, his colleague Mr. Chamberlain was engaged in the congenial task of agitating for its revival in trade. As

Colonial Secretary, he had done much to cultivate a feeling of closer unity between England and her Colonies, which, indeed, had been practically shown on their side by sending numerous volunteers to the help of our armies in the Boer War. It was now proposed to attach them still more closely to the mother country by the concession of certain commercial advantages. So far the reciprocity, as Mrs. Carlyle would say, had been all on one side, seeing that we admitted their staple exports duty-free while they kept out our manufactures by a high protective tariff. At one time a system of Free Trade within the Empire had been suggested, with protective duties against the foreigner alone. But, as this was an arrangement which the Colonial manufacturers could on no account have been induced to accept, a compromise was hit on. Australia had already begun to admit our products into her markets at a slightly lower rate of duties than those levied on the goods of other nations. Why should not she and all the other Colonies be induced to differentiate still further in our favour by our continuing to admit their goods duty free, while taxing all other imports to such an extent as would give Colonial wares, and especially Colonial food-stuffs, an advantage that would enable them to drive all other competitors out of the English market? And this, it was argued, would be only fair in view of the increasing tolls everywhere imposed for protective purposes on English manufactures, to the signal benefit, as was alleged, of the working classes in the countries where that policy had been adopted.

The Tariff Reformers, as Mr. Chamberlain's

followers called themselves, worked this last point with unremitting energy in their addresses to popular audiences, through platform oratory and a cheap daily Press. Increased wages for those already employed, and employment for those out of work, were held out as inducements to abandon the whole commercial system on which this country had lived and thriven for fifty years, and which was looked up to as an ideal by economic thinkers all over the world.

It was a remarkable and suspicious circumstance that Conservatives, of all people, should be found making war on routine and tradition, appealing to reason against prejudice and fetish-worship; remarkable also that capitalists, landowners, and parsons should suddenly develop such an intense interest in the welfare of the artisan and the labourer. Even under the *alias* of Tory Democrat, a Conservative who does not conserve looks like an unintelligible self-contradiction until it has been discovered that he is harking back to the catchwords used by his grandfather sixty years ago.

After all, what the Tariff Reformers urged was not reason, but authority—the authority of Germany, a retrograde military Empire, and the authority of America, whose external policy is controlled by a plutocratic ring. They refused to see that Germany and America owe their increasing prosperity—so far as it is real—not to Protection, but to the sort of scientific education that Conservatism alone prevents England from acquiring.

What the British working man saw clearly through all the bewildering statistics, and still more bewildering calculations, flourished in his face

by the parasites and subsidised organs of the capitalist and landlord interest, was that an attempt was being made to tax his food, for the benefit partly of the rich at home, partly of Colonial millionaires—including the South African Randlords, who were importing gangs of coolies to work under durance in gold mines acquired at an enormous cost of English blood and treasure. A remedy for unemployment was, no doubt, highly desirable; but working men were inclined to look for it in a readjustment of the relations between labour and capital on Socialist lines rather than in new taxes on food.

Mr. Balfour, who succeeded Lord Salisbury as Prime Minister in July, 1902, combines with much less strength of character than Mr. Chamberlain a far finer and more cultivated intelligence; nor does he take his opinions at a five years' lease. But he belongs to a class of thinkers whose distrust of expert opinion leads them to reject the modern and scientific view of any subject in favour of some compromise with the older and more popular view. At a time when most men of intellect and learning not in Holy Orders had abandoned the popular theology, he published a book called *The Foundations of Belief*, for the purpose of rehabilitating it by a sceptical attack on reasoned belief in general. Suitability to our convenience seemed to be the test of credibility for this new logic, which in less articulate utterances is a very old logic indeed. He also advocated bimetallism—a convenient and therefore, presumably, a true doctrine for those who wish to pay off their gold debts in a depreciated silver

currency ; but, by the same token, an inconvenient and untrue doctrine for their unfortunate creditors. On the question of Tariff Reform Mr. Balfour now professed himself a Free Trader, though not a fanatical one. If foreign countries kept out our goods by exorbitant duties, they were to be coerced into a more liberal policy by the imposition of retaliatory duties on their exports to us. It mattered nothing that retaliation had been long since abandoned after trial by English financiers ; that the Protectionist States did not seem to have facilitated commercial relations with each other by their system of mutual prohibition ; that retaliation could only work by giving artificial encouragement to industries which would refuse to be suppressed when the foreigner yielded to our demands. Every consideration suggested by experience or expediency gave way before the comprehensive and ingenuous principle that you cannot make a bargain unless you have something to offer.

Differences on economic policy proved fatal to the union of the Unionist Ministry. Mr. Chamberlain resigned because he was a Protectionist ; the Duke of Devonshire and others resigned because they were Free Traders ; finally, Mr. Balfour resigned, apparently because he was neither a Protectionist nor a Free Trader. His successor, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, had been chosen Liberal leader in 1899 on the strength, one must suppose, of his Parliamentary abilities, seeing that he had no record of distinguished public services, nor any standing as a popular hero outside the House. His Ministry, however, marks an entirely

new departure in English history from the extent to which it has been made up independently of the oligarchic tradition. Half the members of the Cabinet, carrying at least three quarters its weight of metal, are unconnected by birth with the great governing families; and of these the most popular is the former working man, Mr. John Burns. Regard for simple ability has never before been pushed so far in the choice of an Administration, and it is an earnest of what the future may bring forth. As the demands on Government in respect both to legislative and administrative efficiency grow more numerous and exacting, its functionaries in the higher as well as in the lower grades have to be chosen from a wider area; while again the transfer of Sovereignty, in John Austin's sense, from the middle class to the working class involves, by a sort of compensatory movement, the transfer of high office from the aristocracy to the professional and business classes, in whom the people have more confidence, being more accustomed to resort to them for advice and direction, as was long ago pointed out by James Mill.

Knowing that public opinion was on their side, the Liberals had long been pressing for a Dissolution; and Mr. Balfour, by resigning, placed it in their power to dissolve. The result surpassed their most sanguine expectations, and is without a parallel since 1832. The Unionists were left in a minority of 354—more than double their triumphant majority of 1895. In England, the most Conservative part of the Kingdom, where they had stood at 3 to 1 in 1895, and at more than 8 to 3 in 1900, they

now held little more than three seats to eight. True, the so-called Ministerialists did not form a homogeneous mass, for they included 84 Nationalists and 41 Independent Labour members; but the pure Liberals numbered 387—that is to say, a majority of more than 100 against the field.

This enormous shift in the party balance has been explained by a popular metaphor—the swing of the pendulum. On points of principle, however, there was no oscillation. As at the last two elections, the people voted for keeping their fundamental institutions intact. They were conservative in a better sense than the so-called Conservatives themselves, and more united than the Unionist party. They wished to preserve Free Trade; for, without being very profound economists, they knew that it had expert opinion and, so far as food went, common sense on its side. They wished to preserve and develop the Education settlement of 1870 as against the intrusion of subsidised dogma into the elementary schools. They looked with just suspicion on the importation of coolie labour into South Africa as an attempt to revive the slave-trade, abolished a century before. And now, as always, they condemned the inefficiency that accompanies divided counsels. If it had offended their instincts that Gladstone should separate from his old friends in 1886, and that Harcourt should be at loggerheads with Lord Rosebery in 1895, it offended them still more that Mr. Balfour should neither be able to agree with his late colleagues nor altogether, as appeared, with himself. Finally, it would, perhaps, not be too much if we were to credit the people with a wish

to avoid the mistake of 1885, and to secure the stability of the Liberal Government by giving it a majority over all other parties combined.

In carrying down this narrative to a date so recent as the last General Election, I have somewhat exceeded the limit usually assigned to even the most modern histories. My apology is that no other equally distinct line of demarcation between old things and new offers itself among the events of the immediate past. I propose to conclude with a general survey of the tendencies observable during the whole period embraced in this work.

Chapter XIX.

THE ECLIPSE OF GENIUS

It was shown in the first chapter of this work that the English constitutionalism of the eighteenth century, described by Montesquieu as an organisation of liberty, really amounted to an organisation of anarchy, not satisfying the requirements either of order or of progress, but indirectly favouring the development of individual genius and, to a still greater degree, the growth of material wealth. This genius also devoted itself to no very ideal ends, serving at its best for the creation of new mechanical appliances at home, and at its worst for the furtherance of conquest and rapine abroad; while the greed to which it ministered made men capable of the most heinous crimes.

During the latter part of the eighteenth century, and on into the first decades of the nineteenth, the increasing power of the Crown, instead of building up a new order, adds to the existing anarchy, disorganising the military power of the kingdom, breeding disaffection among its Roman Catholic inhabitants, and driving some of England's noblest citizens, at a time when her very existence was at stake, from the service of the State.

It seems at first as if the French Revolution would merely aggravate the evils under which we suffered, by turning the Government from a machine for levying taxes into an active agency for the

repression of free speech in politics and religion. Such, however, is not the most permanent, nor even the most immediate, effect of that unparalleled upheaval. By kindling into flame all the latent tendencies making for beauty in art, for truth in science, philosophy, religion—nor for these alone, but also for the "manners, freedom, virtue, power" whose loss our lost leader too belatedly deplored—the Revolution regenerates England with less expense of ruin than had been needed for the regeneration of France and Continental Europe. And so, when France turns faithless to her high mission as an evangelist of liberty, England comes forward to defend the cause of oppressed nationalities with sword and pen; first against Napoleon, then, after Napoleon's fall, against the Holy Alliance, until that also dissolves under the far extended influence of Canning's voice and Canning's will.

The power of the Crown, already undermined by the disease, discredit, and discord of its personal representatives, finally succumbs to the new spirit; and soon afterwards the old Tory party goes to pieces, one section uniting with the victorious Whigs, whose prestige is still further heightened by a second French Revolution, giving Parliamentary government on the English model to France. Under their auspices a first instalment of electoral reform transfers Sovereignty from the aristocracy to the middle class. This extension of political rights, so far from weakening the Administration, gives it increased strength, enabling a series of much-needed reforms, inspired by the philosophy of Bentham, to be carried. Then a rich and

privileged State Church gradually makes the position of the reforming Ministers untenable by blocking some of their most important measures, luring away their ablest men, and exciting popular bigotry against the faithful remnant. Yet even so progress is not arrested. For the reactionists defeat their own ends by placing in power a great middle class administrator, who, in his heart, despises the views that he affects to share. Free Trade, long advocated by the philosophical Radicals, finally triumphs under his direction, and the new Conservatism, like the old Toryism, is ruined by his desertion.

Free Trade only gives a triumphant popular expression to a new and peculiar phase of thought, a movement of temporary alienation from the State as such, a more or less declared hostility to all Sovereignty. For many years before the abolition of the Corn Laws, the main current of English Liberalism has flowed in other than political channels; and, indeed, a tendency shows itself all round to seek elsewhere than in the political conflicts of the day for the supreme interests of life, demanding on their behalf complete immunity from State control. A band of Oxford scholars, resenting Parliamentary interference with the Irish Church Establishment, assert the right of the Anglican Church to determine her own doctrine and discipline, and to preside over the spiritual destinies of the nation, by virtue of a divine commission handed down from the Apostles. A host of Presbyterian enthusiasts, casting away the bonds of lay patronage, unite in a new community supported by voluntary contributions. On the

material side it is proposed to supersede the legal relief of poverty by reviving the tutelage of the hereditary nobility over the peasants who cultivate their estates; while others wish to make the working classes altogether independent of eleemosynary aid by encouraging them to found co-operative societies for production and distribution. A series of new works in prose and poetry mark a new age of literary productivity, only less brilliant than the epochs of the Revolutionary war and the Regency. This new literature is not inspired by politics, but by individual motives, either social or philosophical; it does not oscillate, like the earlier and greater literatures, between revolt and resignation, defiance and despair, but is penetrated with infinite love and pity, fed from gorgeous memories, and illuminated by immortal hopes. A new school of history, saturated with literary and artistic feeling, aims at the ideal reproduction of the most stirring scenes, the most heroic figures of the past, in language approaching the effect of plastic or pictorial representation. And, conversely, the greatest prose writer of the century devotes himself to a literary interpretation of painting, architecture, and natural scenery, as a symbolism of the most thrilling emotions and of the profoundest ethical truths.

Science, after 1830, so organises her methods and so extends her domain as to cover the whole field of experience; while the philosophy of the previous century, revived with greater power than ever, declares that outside experience nothing can be known. The modern theories of energy and of evolution, enunciated with more and more distinctness,

are finally combined with the principles of the great English economists in a system of absolute individualism—a grandiose attempt to demonstrate that liberation from the tutelage of the State is the true goal of all reform, and an amount of vital enjoyment strictly proportioned to the vital effort put forth, the destined reward of all virtuous activity in the final stage of human development.

A view of the world and of life so committed to reason, so passionately human, so proudly self-sufficient, even when taking on a religious colouring, implicitly contradicts the pietistic movement, whether under its Tractarian or its Evangelical formulation. With the increasing seriousness of the age this contradiction becomes more explicit, and makes itself felt partly within the Church as a mystical modification of the old teaching, partly both among the clergy and the laity as a destructive criticism of the alleged evidences on which the various theologies have been built up. Carried on simultaneously among the higher and the lower classes of society, with more or less of reticence and caution on the one side, with uncompromising frankness on the other, the disintegrating process leads to a legal decision liberating the ministers of the Establishment from their supposed obligation to regard the whole Bible or any part of it as necessarily true—a decision which, so far, has been much more effective in giving freedom of speech to the laity than in giving it to the clergy.

Side by side with the emancipation of thought and feeling in England we find a world-wide movement for the propagation of political and civil liberty on the English model, partly stimulated by

direct encouragement from England. Peel's fall brings back to power Palmerston, the inheritor of Canning's spirit, and for a period of nearly twenty years the foremost figure in English politics, sometimes opposed on questions of detail by Russell and Gladstone, but at the great critical moments of European history working in fellowship with them. His personality is a potent factor in the Revolution of 1848, leading to the second French Empire, with whose aid he destroys Russia's European ascendancy, thus rendering possible two great triumphs of nationalism—first, the unification of Italy, practically accomplished during his life and with his assistance; then, after his death, the unification of Germany, whose preparation in Schleswig-Holstein an imperfect historical appreciation had led him to oppose.

An anti-slavery movement in America, long fed by English sympathy, leads up, during Palmerston's Administration, to a civil war, profoundly misconceived as to its origin and issues by the governing classes of England, but permanently affecting the future course of her history. After a struggle of unexampled magnitude, democracy triumphs in America, reawakening the dormant democratic spirit of the English people, and so doing for the revived Reform agitation of the middle 'sixties what the second French Revolution had done for middle-class enfranchisement in 1830, while it simultaneously re-kindles the smouldering fire of Irish nationality. English working men, debarred from exercising the right of combination to the full extent represented by their Trade Unions, seek a remedy for their grievances through the

acquisition of the Parliamentary franchise, as their fathers had sought to carry out more visionary schemes of social justice through the instrumentality of the People's Charter. Then the three streams of English Liberalism, rationalist, political, and industrial, uniting in a current of irresistible strength, for a time bear down all before them. Much that the Whigs of 1830 had feared or failed to accomplish is now obtained. Household suffrage, the ballot, Church disestablishment and land reform in Ireland, the relief of Dissenters from Church rates, the nationalisation of the universities, the provision up to a certain point of unsectarian elementary education by the State, the rescue of the Army from plutocratic monopoly — articles mostly of the Benthamite programme—are carried, so to speak, at a rush. Then the reforming Ministers, failing to appreciate the breadth and depth of the movement they profess to lead, find themselves replaced by the reactionists, with whose help they have held their own most advanced followers in check. The Tory leader on his side loses ground by abetting a feeble attempt to restrain the superstitious practices in which Church Toryism finds its most genuine expression.

Meanwhile a more effective stand is made against reviving sacerdotalism by a renewal of the rationalistic movement, this time headed by the most distinguished names in poetry, literature, philosophy, and science—an ample compensation for the temporary defeat of Liberalism in politics. And that defeat is soon turned into overwhelming victory. As in the times of Canning and Palmerston, political Liberalism receives a new impetus from

the sympathy of England with the struggle of nationalism against oppression, represented this time by the Christian subjects of the Porte. Irish interests intervene also, for the fourth time in the century, to complicate the situation, making the task of Liberal statesmen on their return to office incomparably more difficult. Still, thanks to the ever-growing power of the State—itself a result of democratic progress—the legislative and administrative machine, by whichever party leader it may be directed, works with a smoothness and an efficiency before unknown.

It is possible that a concentration of power already so great, and likely to grow greater still, may be viewed by some friends of liberty with jealousy and alarm. It was, in fact, so viewed by Herbert Spencer. This greatest of all English systematic thinkers latterly devoted most of his philosophical activity to upholding the rights of the individual against the claims of the State. Historically his position, like Buckle's, was determined by sympathy with the economists in their fight for the new Poor Law and for Free Trade. Here, however, we are not concerned with the derivation of the theory, but with its truth. Spencer's physiological analogies will not help us much, nor will his general law of evolution, to which others might give a different interpretation. It is a question to be settled on grounds of relative expediency. No doubt there have been occasions in the world's history when similar developments of State sovereignty have proved injurious to the industry, the intellect, the morality, or the general

well-being of the people which experienced them. With ourselves the experience is comparatively new, and perhaps the materials for a comprehensive estimate of its meaning do not yet exist. But so far the prospect seems hopeful. It will be remembered that the experiment of anarchy was tried, more or less, in the eighteenth century, with results which were not satisfactory, even from the standpoint of freedom. The freedom of some meant the enslavement of others, more especially the freedom of parents to bring up their children as they liked. A child necessarily lives in subjection ; but compulsory education in a modern schoolroom is, generally speaking, more to its taste—less like slavery—than compulsory toil in a pestilential factory. For grown-up people a visit from the inspector of nuisances involves less restraint than confinement to a sick bed. To take a more complex case, immunity from ecclesiastical tyranny has only been obtained at the price of having an Administration able to carry measures securing it through Parliament. A weak Government, at the mercy of sinister sectional interests, may be easily got to pass Protectionist legislation ; to repeal such legislation, or to prevent its re-enactment, are tasks demanding irresistible strength.

Our present enormous naval and military expenditure involves the levying of taxes to a corresponding extent ; and this, though sanctioned, after a fashion, by the majority of the electorate, certainly amounts to an abridgment of the liberty of those who pay against their will. Yet even here it may be argued that the practical alternative does not lie between high and low taxes. It lies

between contributions to a fleet and army maintained for defensive purposes by our own Government, and equal contributions made to maintain the fleet and army of some Continental Power, which would annex us if we were not prepared to fight for independence, as Japan was prepared to fight Russia.

Freedom of criticism on the Government is considerably greater now than when a weak and incapable oligarchy held the reins. Freedom of criticism in theology, nearly lost under the long Tory *régime,* has been recovered step by step with the later growth of democracy. At Oxford and Cambridge in particular the change has been most remarkable since Thirlwall was driven from the one and J. A. Froude, several years later, from the other—Thirlwall for opposing compulsory chapel attendance, and Froude for publishing a novel of heterodox tendencies. There, as also at the Scotch universities, Hegel's philosophy has played the same part it played between two and three generations ago in Germany, at once veiling and facilitating the transition from a supernaturalist to a scientific view of nature and man. For a time Hegelians, both of the looser and the stricter observance, were at pains to convey their dissent from the popular theology in language open to an orthodox interpretation. More recently the chief representatives of the school have emulated the plain speaking of Strauss and Feuerbach.

One sometimes hears it said that the Materialism of thirty years ago has been superseded by a theory variously described as Spiritualism and as Idealism. The assertion is doubly misleading. It is not true

that Materialism, in the philosophical sense, prevailed to a greater extent then than now. Mill, Spencer, Lewes, Tyndall, Huxley, and Clifford would have disclaimed the name with as much right as Mr. Haldane or Mr. Asquith. If, on the other hand, the name is used to denote denial of supernatural religion, or as the equivalent of Agnosticism, then it is not true to say that Materialism has been superseded, for such denial is now more common than ever, whether among philosophers or among the educated classes in general.

Materialism in another sense—that is to say, the rage for the acquisition of money valued chiefly as a means for the gratification of animal or childish appetites—has, unhappily, been long on the increase, as is shown, among other ways, by the spread of a passion for gambling through all classes of the community. Rapid industrial progress naturally fixes the attention on money-making, and on the spending or the reinvestment of what is made, as the great interests of life; and gambling enables both these ends to be pursued with the least possible trouble or delay, the gratification of getting money and the gratification of spending it (in fresh stakes) being so combined as to raise each other to the highest pitch of intensity. And democracy, in so far as it favours industrial progress, shares to that extent in the responsibility for its reaction on private life.

It remains to consider the modern movement in its reaction on the intellectual life of the community. So far as this is represented by the amount of

literary genius forthcoming, most qualified judges are, I presume, agreed in thinking that what we have to report is a continuous decline, advancing by a series of downward steps until at the present day we find ourselves in a state of destitution not paralleled since the period preceding the Reformation. It may be open to question whether the generation of Byron, Shelley, and Keats shows any falling-off from the generation of Wordsworth, Hazlitt, Scott, Lamb, Coleridge, Landor, and Jane Austen. But the Regency clearly stands above the Early Victorian period as much as that stands above the Middle Victorian period, and the Middle Victorian above the Late. As for our own age, it would be surprising to learn that any English writer now under fifty has produced a book which will be remembered as literature fifty years hence. The literary output is, indeed, enormous both in prose and poetry; and much talent is devoted to literature as a profession: never before has the average of cleverness, and even of good writing, been so high. But high averages are no substitute for exceptional genius; as Goethe says, a hundred greys do not make one white horse.

This dearth of first-class literary ability has been ascribed to the absorption of the nation's best intellect in scientific work. The explanation might hold good if science had more distinguished names to boast of than literature. Unhappily, she has not. Here also, or, rather, here especially, mediocrity seems to be the order of the day since 1879, the year of Clifford's and Clerk Maxwell's death. We often hear of new discoveries and new

methods, but there is a remarkable impersonality about them; they are the result of co-operation among a number of inquirers rather than of individual genius. It is the same in philosophy, except that philosophy has no such certain results to show. The Early and Middle Victorian heroes, Mill, Bain, Buckle, and Spencer, are supposed to have been superseded—by whom, or for how long, is not clear.

Historical composition, involving as it does both literary and scientific ability, supplies us with another test. An arrangement of nineteenth-century historians in chronological groups gives us first: Hallam, Napier, Milman, Grote, Arnold, Thirlwall, Finlay, and Macaulay; followed by Kinglake, Helps, Froude, Buckle, Freeman, Goldwin Smith, Stubbs, and Gardiner; next come Seeley, J. R. Green, Lecky, Bryce, Sir George Trevelyan, and J. A. Symonds; after whom we are left with the contributors to *The Cambridge Modern History,* and to *The Political History of England.*

Parliamentary, forensic, pulpit, and platform oratory have declined at the same rate—a circumstance the more remarkable as one would expect every form of eloquence to be stimulated by a democratic environment; and journalism, as compared with what it was fifty, forty, or thirty years ago, shows a like decay.

Women have contributed so much to the best English literature that their emancipation and higher education might well have been looked to as opening fresh sources of power. If anything, the effect of their more favoured position has been

to stop the former supplies. Not only are the Sibylline books rapidly decreasing in number, but their contents are less interesting, and the price paid for them has risen.[1]

It was said twenty years ago that there was no man in the whole world under fifty one would cross the street to look at. Thus, whatever may be the causes of this decline in genius, they are common to all civilised mankind ; only, as England used to be in a peculiar way the land of genius, they must have acted with exceptional energy among ourselves. In all probability these causes are no other than the tendencies already indicated as characteristic of our more recent history: the rise of a strong Government, the reform of abuses, the growth of democracy, the accumulation of wealth, the spread of education, the dissolution of theological beliefs. Let us see in what way they work.

It is a question whether Shelley was right when he said that to divide true love is not to take it away. One would have liked to hear Mary's opinion on the subject. At any rate, to divide intellect *is* to take it away. Now, merely to keep going, and periodically to renew, the huge administrative, legislative, military, and educational machinery of the modern State must absorb an enormous amount of intelligence and moral force, leaving so much the less available, so to speak, for play. Subjection, also, to such machinery involves a certain amount of steady drill, a uniformity of regulation by which genius is apt to be stifled.

[1] The accomplished historian of modern astronomy, Miss Agnes Clerke, was educated entirely at home.

When we hear that a Government office is a nest of singing birds we may conjecture, without listening, that the birds do not utter wood-notes wild.

Besides repressing originality and spontaneity among the higher intellects, popular education indirectly contributes to the same result by calling into existence a new public of inferior taste and less critical ability. Men of letters, and even men of science—not to mention politicians and preachers —lay themselves out to capture this new public by catering to its demands. At the same time, the number of candidates for popular favour being immensely multiplied by the diffusion of a facile culture, each competitor tries to draw attention to himself by sedulously cultivating what is called the personal note, which is more often than not a borrowed note strained out of recognition in a particular way. Now, the test of prose destined to become classical is that it can be read over and over again with increasing pleasure ; whereas the oftener we read this prose of the spurious personal note, the more obvious does its meretricious character become. And the test of good poetry, as Leslie Stephen pointed out, is that it learns itself by heart, which is just what does not happen with poetry that is a jumble of outlandish vocables, painfully picked out of the dictionary, or of adjectives whose connection with their substantives amounts to a syntactical intrigue.

Men and women of ability are, by the sympathetic and communicative tendency of their nature, peculiarly susceptible to such far-fetched literary appeals ; so that they sincerely admire the misdirection of talent, and point it out for the admiration

of the less gifted in the critical organs that they control. At the same time the increasing accumulation of wealth, with its inevitable accompaniment of increasing luxury, makes the production of paying—that is to say, artificial or morbid—literature an economic necessity. And men of science work under the same restraint. Once, like Agassiz, they had no time to make money. Perhaps in the near future they will have no time for anything else.

I have mentioned the removal of abuses and the destruction of false dogmas in progress for the last century as counting among influences unfavourable to genius. One is sorry to have to say this of such a necessary process; but I believe it will be found, on examination, that the fact is so. For these reforms, however salutary in other ways, tell also as the withdrawal of so much stimulation from that militant enthusiasm, that noble rage against cruelty and falsehood, which has ever been so large a constituent in the higher intellectual energisings of the past. Relative wrongness has been the negative electricity without which the positive electricity of their relative rightness could not exist. We know it from the confessions of genius. Shelley, with full adhesion, quotes Byron as saying that "most men are cradled into poetry by wrong." Newman tells the scholar who would reach "Love's high unruffled state," that he must "first learn him how to hate." Browning explains that Dante "loved well because he hated, hated wickedness that hinders loving." And even Matthew Arnold, who hated hatred itself, cries

out when confronted by an evil world: "Let me be keener to slay thee lest thou poison me!"

In accordance with this law, genius, where it still exists, is chiefly to be found among the collectivists or the anarchists to whom our whole society is hateful as an organised spoliation of the working classes; an organised defilement of the sexual relations; an organised and useless torture, inflicted under the name of justice, on those unhappiest victims whom we call the criminal classes.

It is no part of the historian's business to predict or to advise; and the present writer, at any rate, is not conscious of being qualified for either office. What has been said in this connection must therefore not be taken as expressing any approval of the views so brilliantly advocated in some contemporary novels and dramas. The sole point contended for is that literary genius, with few exceptions, has so far found its highest expression in a moral purpose, in the utterance of a protest against the propagation of falsehood or the practice of injustice, real or illusory, in fancy or in fact.

Perhaps a profounder analysis may show that the ethical motive is itself referable to a still more general law, and that the vital conditions of genius are furnished in the last resort by variety and contrast. Now, the general tendency of modern progress has been adverse to those conditions; it has made for assimilation and uniformity. English influence at its best has told for the extension of personal liberty and of representative government over the whole world; more equivocally, for the similar extension of English capitalist industry. At home Liberalism has always meant the extension

of rights and the removal of privileges. Our commercial legislation has decreed that no one industry shall be favoured at the expense of another, that the interest of the consumer shall not be sacrificed to the interest of the producer. Our criminal law has been reformed in the sense of proportioning punishment to crime. Our Factory Acts and Education Acts have given the children of the poor a position more like the position enjoyed by the children of the rich. Our social legislation tends towards giving the working classes the same immunity from disease and danger that is enjoyed by the middle and upper classes, or at any rate a money compensation for its loss. Sir William Harcourt's great Budget of 1894, by its identification of the succession duty on real and personal estate, marks a step in the same direction. It may be objected that, by progressively increasing the duty on large estates, Harcourt rather differentiated than assimilated the burden of taxation. But in reality this arrangement amounts to a more subtle kind of assimilation. For it proportions the tax, not to what has been inherited, but to what can be spared. And the same rule holds in reference to the system of exemptions and deductions observed in assessing small incomes for taxation.

Assimilation seems also to be the law of progressive religious thought in England. Evangelical pietism aimed at extending the field of religious obligation over the whole of life. Tractarianism tried to do the same thing more thoroughly by providing a more effective machinery for the purpose; by assimilating the Church of England, first to the primitive, and then to the mediæval, Church.

Since then, as a direct result of Anglican influence, there has followed the Modernist movement of our own time, which is simply an assimilation of Roman to Protestant principles on the lines of private judgment as distinguished from authority and tradition. Meanwhile, for over two centuries, the far broader methods of Rationalism have been working for the establishment of one uniform philosophy of existence, constructed on principles of pure reason, and tending towards the total exclusion of a supernatural world from any share in our interests or beliefs.

Genius of a high order has been required for carrying out some of these assimilations; but their total effect has been to abolish the conditions under which genius exists, just as the highest military abilities need war to bring them into activity, and are then thrown into the shade by the peace that they have helped to restore. It must, therefore, not be read as a sign of degeneration that genius among ourselves is no longer forthcoming in the same profusion as before. Whether it be, as some have tried to show, a morbid growth of the mind still remains uncertain; that it grows on morbid conditions seems an established fact. And one of these conditions is, over and above the existence of inequalities and contrasts, an erroneous appreciation of their values—a false estimate of their real extent, a false estimate of their importance for human happiness, a false estimate of the rapidity with which it is possible for human intellect and energy to replace them, when they are undesirable, by an improved state of things. Now, such an erroneous valuation is particularly stimulating to

genius. "Thy sorrow," exclaims Carlyle, "is the inverted image of thy nobleness; the depth of thy despair is the measure of thy capacity for hope!" But, unfortunately for genius, the tendency of advancing knowledge is to diminish both its sorrow and its hope. That we should have learned to appreciate the difficulties of reform as they never were appreciated before is only one aspect of the universal disillusionment our organised experience has brought about. And this decay of illusion must be counted among the causes to which the decline of genius is due. For illusion was the very air that it breathed—an illusive estimate of the evils to be overcome, and of the forces available for their overthrow; an illusive estimate of historical heroism, individual or collective, creating epics and dramas through all the past; illusive estimates of what the old religions had effected, leading to estimates equally illusive of what new religions or new sciences might also effect, creating Utopias in the future—these, in great measure, inspired the splendid imaginative and historical literatures, the vast philosophies, the glowing oratory, whose discontinuance we now deplore. Yet for our own clearer sense of reality we must also thank those children of light, the men of genius, less careful than the children of this world to secure the perpetuation of their race. For that very organisation of experience which has dispersed the mists of ignorance is their work; nor can its lessons be more impressively conveyed than in the warning given by Matthew Arnold, as the sum of Wordsworth's teaching, neither to make man too much a God, nor God too much a man.

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